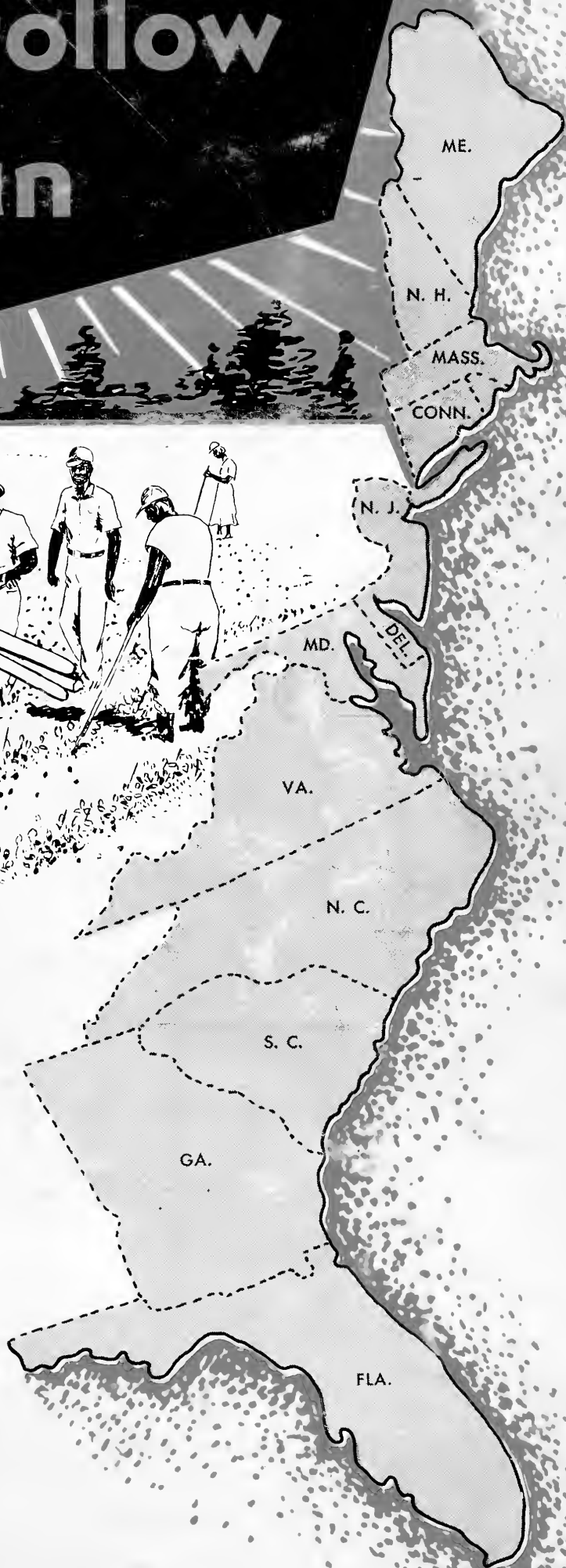


331.796

K82t



# They Follow The Sun



**THE FLORIDA STATE  
BOARD OF HEALTH**

**Assisted By  
A Grant From  
The United States  
Children's Bureau**

331796  
K82t

UNIVERSITY  
OF FLORIDA  
LIBRARIES





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2011 with funding from  
LYRASIS Members and Sloan Foundation

<http://www.archive.org/details/theyfollowsun00koos>

# THEY FOLLOW THE SUN

Earl Lomon Koos

BUREAU OF MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH  
FLORIDA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA  
1957

The publication of this report is  
made possible through  
the cooperation of  
The Children's Bureau,  
The United States Department  
of Health, Education,  
and Welfare



## PREFACE

In 1954 the Bureau of Maternal and Child Health of the Florida State Board of Health began a series of activities designed more adequately to meet the needs of the migrant agricultural laborers who "winter" in the state. It was soon found that most of the studies of the migrant laborer had been concerned largely with the economic and labor aspects of migration, and that very little was known of any but the most obvious of the migrant's other problems. The Children's Bureau of the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, which had been concerned about the health of migrant mothers and their children for some time, became interested in our problem and eventually provided a grant to the State Board of Health for the purpose of underwriting part of the cost of a study project.

The State Board of Health was most fortunate in being able to secure the services of Dr. Earl Lomon Koos, Professor of Social Welfare at Florida State University, to serve as director of the project. Dr. Koos served without compensation and Florida State University was most generous in permitting him to take the necessary time from his busy schedule.

The study reported in these pages was an effort to add to the existing knowledge of migrants and their problems. It was designed not to be a census of migrants and their problems, but to learn insofar as possible of the total life pattern of this group who move from state to state in search of a living. For it is believed that only to the extent that the dynamics of the migrant's life are recognized and understood can health and welfare personnel meet the needs of this sizable population in our country.

A study such as this is confronted with many difficulties, some of which will be outlined in a following chapter. It could not have been carried out, in fact, except for the interest of many people, only a few of whom can be mentioned here. The work of Mr. William J. Hubbard, who served as field investigator during the course of the study, is worthy of special note, as was that of Mrs. Veronica Richimer, public health nurse, who studied and served the households while they were in Florida. Dr. C. L. Brumback, the health officer of Palm Beach County, and his staff were vitally interested in the

study, and their cooperation made it possible. The Negro participant observer who worked with the crew during its sojourn in Virginia and New York, and who prefers to continue to be unidentified, made a contribution of inestimable value.

The Communicable Disease Center of the Public Health Service assigned a Medical Officer to the project for the period of approximately two months to assist in the health evaluation of migrants prior to their departure.

Finally, the study could never have been undertaken had it not been for the cooperation of the labor contractor who allowed his crew to be studied and of the growers in Virginia and New York who used the crew.

To all of these, and to the migrants who unknowingly contributed much to whatever success the study may have had, go the thanks of the sponsor of the study.

R. W. McComas, M.D., M.P.H., Director  
Bureau of Maternal and Child Health  
Florida State Board of Health

## THE PROBLEM

Many studies have been made and much has been written concerning the phenomenon of migratory agricultural labor. To our knowledge, however, there has never been a detailed study of the day-by-day problems which confront the migrant, of the ways in which he (or she) attempts to meet these problems, or of the factors which affect his course of action. Health and welfare agencies must therefore plan and offer services with only a sketchy knowledge of what lies behind the overt need, and then very often find that the services offered are either ignored or accepted only in part. For example, prenatal services are readily available to the migrant woman at no cost to herself, yet migrant mothers very often reach the eighth or even the ninth month of pregnancy without having had a prenatal examination. Again, (child health clinics are operated in every county in which the agricultural migrant works, but serious outbreaks of dysentery have occurred within sight of the clinics—and with the health services uninformed and ignored.) These are only two examples—the personnel of every health department which deals with migrants can offer many others.

Similarly, welfare and school personnel are faced with the problems of providing services—many of them defined and required by law—for the migrants, only to have them ignored or rejected. The task of the project reported in the following pages has been to attempt the identification of the migrant's problems, and (equally important) to seek for reasonable explanations of why the migrant reacts as he does to such services as are offered.

## MIGRATION IN AGRICULTURE

The movement of agricultural laborers from place to place in the United States is not a recent phenomenon. The development of specialized crop areas—sugar beets in Colorado, vegetables in New

Jersey, fruit in Washington and Oregon, and so on — has called for relatively large numbers of workers for relatively short periods of time. Only in rare instances have local communities been able to meet the peak labor needs with their own residents; also, no communities have been able, to our knowledge, to meet the year-round job demands of workers originally brought in to harvest seasonal crops. Agricultural workers have therefore had to migrate from place to place as job opportunities presented themselves, and over the years this migration has become patterned and relatively predictable.

## THE ATLANTIC COAST MIGRANT STREAM

The movement of agricultural labor along the Atlantic coast is of primary interest in this report. Persch (1) reports that as early as 1901 "colored labor from the South was being used in the New England States," and that "migration from crop to crop and from area to area [had become] an established pattern involving thousands of workers." Most of the early interstate movement was confined, however, to the states of Virginia and southern New England. In the first twenty years of this century, New York and New Jersey developed new production areas for specialized crops. More recently, vegetables and fruits have become important specialized crops along the whole of the Eastern seaboard. Florida became a major producer of such crops in the 1920's, and the continued clearing of the "glades" since that time — with an accompanying extension of the growing season and the development of new varieties of vegetables suitable to the Florida climate — has made this state a home base for increasing numbers of agricultural migrants.<sup>1</sup>

This development of vegetable crop areas has shifted many of the Atlantic coast states from a labor-supply to a labor-demand position as regards agricultural labor, and has served to identify the migrant labor force as a unique group in the total labor force of these states.

**AVAILABLE LABOR** Meeting this need for migrant labor would have been difficult — if not impossible — had it not been for certain accompanying developments in the southern agricultural scene. The cotton lands of the southern states, especially in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina, have been over-worked and under-replenished; cotton has become a major crop in Texas and other western states; and agricultural technology has made the farm

---

<sup>1</sup> As this is written it is estimated that 10,000 acres are being added to the vegetable-growing area of South Florida each year. Most of this addition results from clearing "raw" glade land in Collier County, Florida.

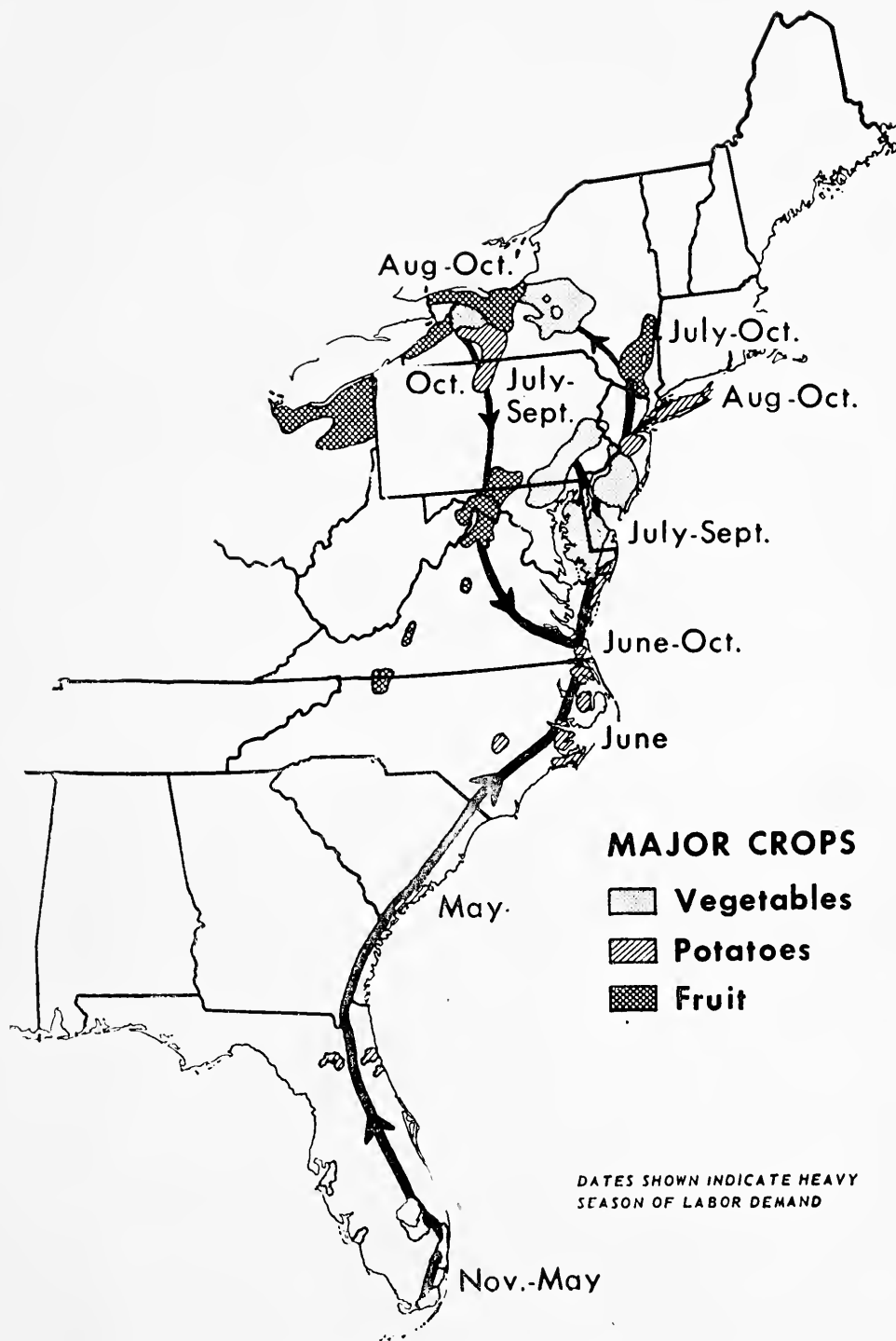


Figure 1. THE ATLANTIC COAST MIGRATORY STREAM. The important vegetable and fruit areas, with high labor requirements, are shown, together with the months of highest demand. (Adapted from *Migratory Farm Workers in the Atlantic Coast Stream*.)

worker in all southern states less secure in his traditional patterns of employment. Georgia and the other southern states have therefore come in recent years to have an excess of farm labor, especially among the Negroes. The result has been to make available sizable numbers of agricultural workers who could enter the Atlantic Coast Stream. (The movement of industry into the southern states has apparently done little to reduce this available labor force, since the agricultural workers with whom this study is considered are not ordinarily considered to be potential industrial workers.)

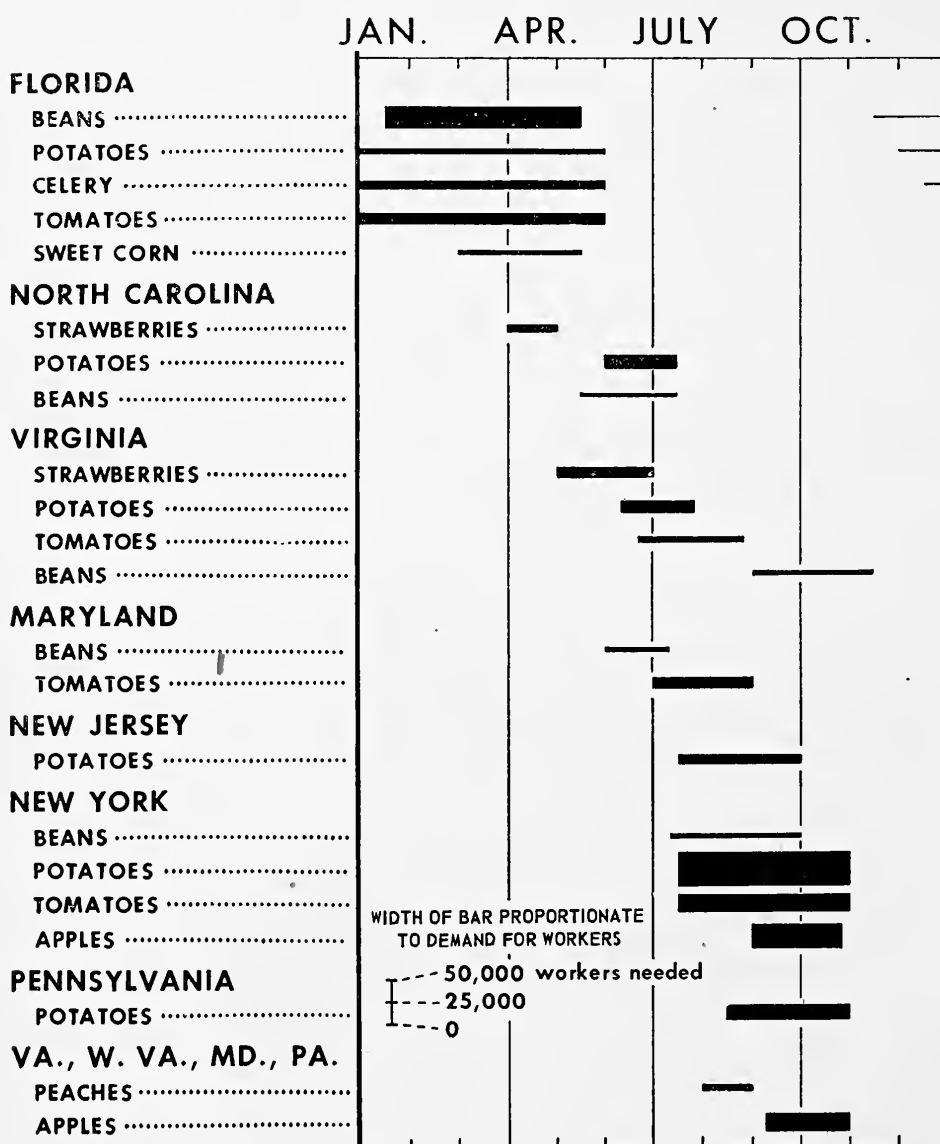


Figure 2. LABOR NEEDS IN ATLANTIC COAST SEASONAL WORK AREAS, BY TYPE OF CROP. The timing of harvests is such as to afford continuous spring and summer employment for migrant workers. (From *Migratory Farm Workers in the Atlantic Coast Stream*.)

In recent years the Atlantic coast migrant labor force has been augmented from two additional sources. Puerto Rican migrants entering the United States at Miami, Florida, have found their way into the migrant stream in relatively small numbers. Also, in recent years Latin-Americans from the southwestern states (especially Texas) have begun to enter the Atlantic Coast Stream as adverse crop conditions have created unemployment in their home states.

**THE NUMBERS INVOLVED IN MIGRATION** It is impossible to give more than an impression of the size of the Atlantic coast migrant agricultural labor force. Only those workers who move in regular crews can be accounted for; the "odd jobbers" or "free wheelers" are rarely included in any census of such migrants. The Farm Placement Service of the Bureau of Employment Security, U. S. Department of Labor, reported that more than 24,000 workers contracted for employment in the Atlantic Coast Stream in 1952.<sup>2</sup> Estimates vary regarding the present movement of agricultural workers, but it is not unreasonable to assume that the total migration, including all ages and dependents as well as workers, involves at least fifty thousand persons.<sup>3</sup>

**THE LABOR CREW** The importance of the labor crew as the major employment unit in the Atlantic Coast Stream must be understood. The crew leader is essentially a "middle man" who contracts with one or more growers in the up-stream states to supply the labor needed for harvesting crops. The crew members are enlisted from among available workers in the Florida communities which serve as home base for the migrants during the winter months.

Arrangements vary from crew to crew, as does the scope of the operation. Some crews consist of a very few workers; others include a hundred or more. Some operate only in one state or for one grower; others include operations in several states and for a number of growers.<sup>4</sup> Some provide transportation for all of their workers; others truck the household effects and the workers travel in private cars. Most crews, however, attempt to enlist all needed workers before moving from Florida, but—as will be seen in a later section—this is not always possible.

---

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished data secured from the Belle Glade office of the Florida State Employment Service. More recent data are not available.

<sup>3</sup> Nothing will be said of the personal characteristics of the migrant at this point, since this is a major topic in a later chapter.

<sup>4</sup> A more detailed description of crew characteristics and operations will be found in *Migratory Farm Workers in the Atlantic Coast Stream* (2).

The crew system serves to stabilize employment patterns, both for the worker and the grower. Furthermore, it affords protection for growers in the Florida area, in that the Florida law requires the licensing of all "emigrant agents" who solicit or hire workers "to be employed beyond the limits of this state." Also, by agreement among the state employment agencies in the Atlantic coast states, crews are not expected to move North until the peak of the Florida harvest has passed, although there is no legal means of preventing such movement.<sup>5</sup>

#### DAY-HAUL LABOR IN FLORIDA

With some few exceptions, labor crews (as recognized units) do not operate in Florida communities in the harvesting of vegetables. Labor (on a day-by-day basis) is solicited by growers, who send trucks to the loading sheds or other central points in the early morning, or by individuals who function as one-day crew leaders and who solicit labor which they then haul to the particular area in which crops are ready for harvesting.

#### THE HAZARDS INVOLVED

The raising of specialty crops, especially the vegetables, is not without its hazards, and these necessarily influence the migrant agricultural worker's life.

For the grower, the success of his operation is, first of all, dependent upon the weather. An untimely frost or a prolonged wet or dry spell can — and often does — ruin a crop.<sup>6</sup> Fluctuations in market prices can make a crop very valuable or — even a few hours later — worthless except for plowing under as "green fertilizer."<sup>7</sup> The lack of a suitable labor supply at the appropriate time can spell financial ruin so far as a particular crop is concerned. Fortunes can be made — and are made — in vegetables, but "you can lose your shirt, too."

For the crew leader, the hazards are equally great, if only in proportion to the size of his operation. The quality of the labor he is able to enlist can vary greatly; a crew may consist of conscientious, reliable workers or it may include quarrelsome, lazy individuals who will work only when hunger presses. The crew may become disgruntled about working or housing conditions, or even about the weather, and desert their leader. The condition of the crops may be

<sup>5</sup> "Emigrant agents," however, must post a bond to assure their meeting requirements of the Florida State Employment Service.

<sup>6</sup> Unlike the citrus crops, no adequate technique has been found for heating the air and thus preventing frost damage to vegetables. The acreages involved are apparently too large to allow the practical use of any known method.

<sup>7</sup> This practice is apparently followed by only a few growers in the Atlantic Coast Stream. In Florida it is considered to be unnecessary or uneconomical; the effort is usually to prepare the field as quickly as possible for another crop.



such that the leader is unable to provide full employment, and he finds it necessary to subsidize the crew in their living costs — at least if he wishes to hold his crew together.

For the migrant, agricultural labor is no less hazardous. Lacking any but the most rudimentary bargaining power, he is at the mercy of the climatic and economic forces which determine his job opportunities. He is also, to put it bluntly, at the mercy of the grower and the crew leader, if they choose to treat him as less than human.

COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND RESOURCES      A migrating population of this size affords very real problems to the communities into which it moves — whether in Florida or in the upstream states. Some of these problems stem from the attitudes of the permanent residents. While the economy of many agricultural service-station communities is totally dependent upon the services of the migrant laborer, that laborer is rarely considered to be anything but a necessary *visitor*. Lacking legal residence, he is often viewed as a nuisance if he requires hospitalization or other care not required by law. Lacking social acceptance — because of his race or other characteristic — he is *in but not a part of* the community, and is therefore ineligible for participation in its social life.

Some communities view “the migrant problem” as a *temporary* one, and have so regarded it for years. In such cases, the housing provided is “temporary,” and meets only minimal legal requirements — where such exist. Schools, hospitals, churches, playgrounds, and the like are built and maintained in terms of the needs of the permanent population; the doubling (or more) of the population during the harvest season means, under such circumstances, that facilities are swamped — or, more likely, that the community simply refuses to accommodate the migrant.

## THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

As stated earlier, the objectives of this study have been to learn of the problems migrants face, of the ways in which they meet the problems, and, hopefully, to gain some insight into the motivations which lie behind their behavior. Any research project with such an objective is faced with a number of difficulties. The migrant population is highly mobile, even within a given community,<sup>8</sup> and continued observation may therefore be difficult. The migrant, whether white

---

<sup>8</sup>This difficulty is greatest when the migrant is not in a crew in Florida; in the Atlantic Coast Stream, membership in the crew (which usually lives in a camp away from town) is likely to keep the migrant in one place.

or Negro, is likely to be suspicious of any but the most superficial contacts with professional personnel. Reliable answers to questions are therefore unlikely, especially if the migrant is Negro, since it has often been observed that the low-income, poorly educated southern Negro is likely to respond to questions *with the answers he thinks the questioner desires*. Under such circumstances, then, it is admitted from the beginning that "cases" will be lost, that data will be incomplete, and that there may be inaccuracies in what is reported.<sup>9</sup>

## THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design for the project specified that:

(1) *The crew must include at least one hundred households.* This figure was set arbitrarily after discussing crew activities with crew leaders and growers in Palm Beach County, and was dictated by the need to have a crew large enough to provide a cross-section of the problems migrants face.

(2) *The crew must be recruited from among households moving into the Atlantic Coast Stream from Palm Beach County, Florida.* Household data, health and welfare records were considered necessary for a period of time prior to the household's entering the stream, and the personnel and money available to the project could not adequately cover cases which came from other counties.

(3) *The crew must work in two or more states in the Atlantic Coast Stream.* This stipulation was made to allow the observation of migrants under the differing circumstances afforded in different states.

(4) *A field investigator must accompany the crew at all times.* If the problems of the migrants, the contractor, the growers, and the communities were to be understood, continued observation was necessary, and could be had only if a project staff member could be on hand at all times.

(5) No special health or welfare services were to be provided by the project staff. If the migrant's solution of his problems was a major focus of the project, it would obviously be impracticable to have the observing personnel *helping* the migrant to meet his problems.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Using a Negro as an unidentified participant observer while the crew was in the stream is believed to have kept the last two of these difficulties to a minimum.

<sup>10</sup> This proved to be a most difficult stipulation to enforce. Public health workers are by their training and inclination interested in meeting human needs; to demand that they view the migrant's problems "with an icy apartness" was placing a special handicap upon them.

To enlist the cooperation of a labor contractor or crew leader whose total situation would allow the fulfillment of these five stipulations was not easy. Health and welfare activities for migrants are often viewed with suspicion, by migrants, crew leaders, and growers. Any project such as this would violate the "rugged individualism" of many growers and labor contractors; it could even be viewed as spying upon current labor management practices. The project was extremely fortunate in gaining — through the efforts of a public health nurse — the cooperation of a labor contractor whose situation met the project's requirements.

The crew employed by this contractor consisted of Negroes, which was fortunate for the project, since an estimated ninety percent of all Atlantic coast migrants are Negroes.

**METHODOLOGY**            The unit of inquiry in this project was the household, defined for present purposes as *one or more individuals, whether related or not, who constitute an economic unit*. This unit of inquiry was decided upon because of the early observation that the family, as usually defined, is for some Negro migrants either an unused relationship or at best a brief serial monogamous attachment.<sup>11</sup>

Forms for recording background data and current developments in the life of each migrant were developed. The daily events in the lives of the migrants were recorded on tape and forwarded to the writer's office, where they were transcribed. Pertinent questions were raised as interview tapes were received, also by tape recording. This afforded central control of all interviewing and records, and made constant contact between the field workers and the principal investigator relatively satisfactory. All background data were obtained by the field investigator and the public health nurse; the Negro participant-observer, who worked as a migrant, supplied detailed accounts (via tape) of the happenings while in the Atlantic Coast Stream, and answered questions raised by the writer as the project progressed.

The project was carried on for a twelve-month period, after an initial trial period of two months, during which time the observation and recording techniques were perfected. Not all migrants were observed for the twelve months, for reasons which will become evident, but this does not invalidate the findings. Only a greatly enlarged staff and more funds — and probably a different project design — would have made a more complete analysis possible.

The background data and the quantitative aspects of the daily

---

<sup>11</sup> The importance of this will be discussed in Chapter 3.

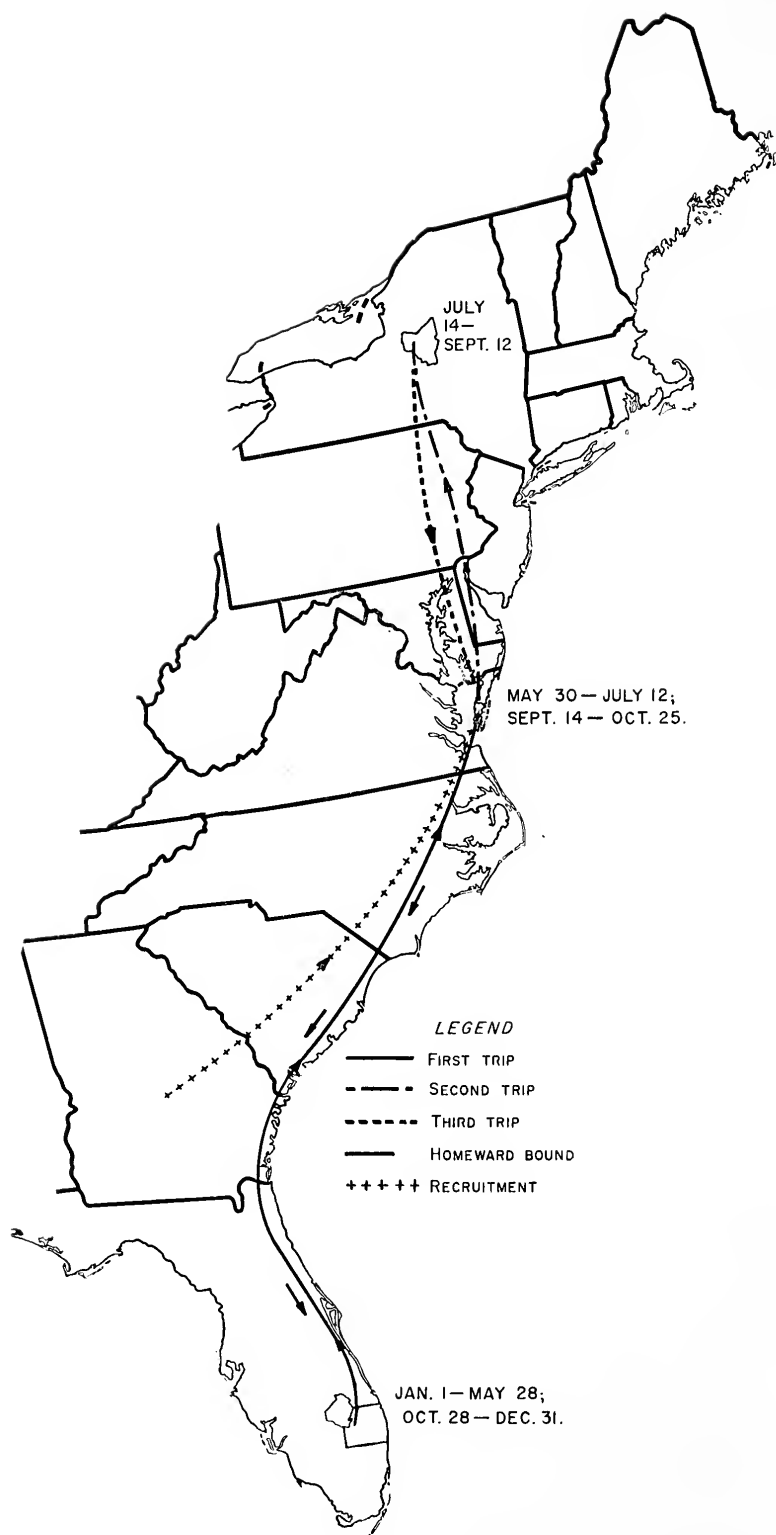


Figure 3. MIGRATION OF THE CREW STUDIED IN THIS PROJECT. The inclusive dates of residence in each county are shown.

observations were analyzed by means of IBM punch cards.<sup>12</sup> Few tables are presented in the following text, for reasons of economy, but further details regarding any discussion are available from the writer.

---

<sup>12</sup> The project is greatly indebted to the writer's graduate research assistant, Mr. Travis Northcutt, for analysis of much of the background data, and to Mrs. Lettie Van-Landingham for transcribing and helping to analyze the lengthy tape recordings.

## THE MIGRANTS

It is impossible to have even a partial understanding of the problems of the migrant agricultural worker unless there is some knowledge of the migrant himself — of his characteristics and his background, and of the circumstances under which he works and lives. The description which follows applies, of course, only to those migrants with whom this project was concerned. There is no reason, however, to believe that these households were significantly different from the general run of those which populate the Atlantic Coast Migrant Stream.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, the intent is simply to describe the migrants; the discussion of the significance of the data is left to later chapters.

### MEMBERSHIP IN THE CREW

It was noted earlier that a crew ordinarily takes form and becomes a working group only at the time of its departure from Florida. This was true for the crew studied, although the tendency had been for each year's crew to include a large proportion of "re-enlistments" from the previous year. The previous year's roster was made available to the staff, and a diligent search was made for the households residing in the area. One hundred and seven were located, of which 96 indicated their intent to "go North" with the crew. Detailed records were secured for these, but only 89 actually joined the crew when it departed. Fourteen others not previously known to the staff appeared at the time of departure, and their histories were obtained shortly thereafter.

Fifty-two additional households joined the crew in Virginia during its first stay there; 44 more were added in New York; 3 others joined

---

<sup>1</sup> Exception may be taken to this statement by the reader, and are recognized as valid. These will be discussed at a later point.

the crew during its second sojourn in Virginia. Seven households left the crew while first in Virginia, 9 while in New York, and 22 while in Virginia the second time. Detailed records were obtained on 202 households, which included 547 individuals, and which constitute the population of this study.

In addition, 11 households entered the crew in Virginia, and 7 in New York, but all left after a stay ranging from 1 hour to 2 days. It was impossible to obtain any histories for these, although something is known of their reasons for moving.

## ORIGINS OF THE CREW

**GEOGRAPHIC ORIGINS** It is not unusual for residents of northern states to refer to the Negro migrant agricultural worker as "those Florida Negroes who come up here to work." In the sense that Florida was the scene of their past winter's employment, this statement is very often correct. The data show, however, that they were rarely Floridian in origin. The state of birth for the 202 households was as follows:

Georgia	129
South Carolina	33
Alabama	12
Mississippi	11
Florida	5
Virginia	3
Tennessee	2
Louisiana	2
Arkansas	2
Other Southern States	3

Florida was the birthplace, then, of only 2.5 percent and Georgia of 63.8 percent of the householders. It is evident that Northerners are somewhat in error in describing this crew as Floridians.

Only 6 (3.0 percent) of the householders reported having been born in a town or city, and 5 of these were from the "border" southern states. It is evident, therefore, that the project was concerned mainly with rural Negroes, largely from "the deep South."

**OCCUPATIONAL ORIGINS** The occupations of the *fathers of the householders* were ascertained to learn something of the socio-cultural background from which these migrants came. Among the 6 householders reporting urban backgrounds, all of the fathers had been day laborers of one type or another. Among the 196 reporting rural

backgrounds, 179 (86.0 percent) of the householders reported their fathers to have been sharecroppers or tenant farmers; the remaining 17 (11.0 percent) reported them to have had unskilled jobs, usually associated in some way with agriculture.

In the case of the householders themselves, only 16 of the 202 (8.3 percent) had not come directly from the land into the migrant stream, and only 13 of these had previously held jobs not associated in some way with agriculture.

In the case of the householders themselves, only 16 of the 202 (8.3 percent) had not come directly from the land into the migrant stream, and only 13 of these had previously held jobs not associated with agriculture.<sup>2</sup> Of the remaining 186, 172 had moved directly from the land — as tenants, sharecroppers, or laborers — into the stream. It is evident, then, that the crew had a high degree of uniformity as regards background, with rural agricultural life as the dominating pattern.

#### SOCIAL ORIGINS

Some of the major characteristics of the society from which these migrants came must be outlined as preface to the discussion of their problems. It is, first of all, a society in which the Negro has been a second-class citizen, and separated from the dominant white group by a strong (and strongly enforced) caste line. His educational and economic opportunities have been sharply limited. While his educational opportunities are rapidly being improved, the improvements come too late to affect the adults, or even some of the older children. His occupational opportunities, in contrast, are increasingly limited. The growing industrialization of the South has given him few opportunities for work, for there are numbers of whites ready and willing to take factory jobs. Also, there is serious question in the minds of many employers as to the rural Negro's ability to adapt himself to the rigid routines required by industry. The mechanization of agriculture (an increasing phenomenon in the South) tends to force him off the land, and since agricultural labor is all that he knows and all that is available to him, it is to agriculture — wherever it may be located — that he turns for a livelihood.

In one sense, the rural society from which he comes has afforded him a high level of security (by his own standards), for his employer "stood for him" at the local store or commissary, and he had his house, a garden patch, a pig or two, and some cash at "settlin' up

---

<sup>2</sup>None of these jobs were reported as being other than at the "crude labor" level.



time" (if the crop had been good and the price right). His job made relatively small demands upon him, except at certain seasons, and even then he was not subject to the rigid demands characteristic of industry.

His way of life was dictated by habit and tradition, and, because of his limited contacts with the outside world and his few resources, has been subject to few innovations. His aspirations were few and modest, both for his children or for himself. He had had little in the past; the present gave him not much more; the future held no particular promise. His ideas about health were distinctly his own, and tied directly to his low educational status and to the poverty of his aspirations. His lack of money and education and his subordinate relation to the white members of his community made him indifferent to the patterns of beliefs, morals, and behavior prescribed by the dominant white element in the community.

It was from a social order such as this that most of these migrants moved into the Atlantic Coast Stream; it was from this background that his adjustment to a new way of life — different if not better — had to be made.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CREW

**SEX AND AGE**                      The total crew had 81 males to every 100 females, and the distribution by sex and age was as follows:

	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Under 5 years	35	47
5-14 years	61	62
15-19 years	43	47
20-34 years	74	68
35-49 years	20	50
50 years and over	13	27
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	246	301

Figure 4 shows the percentage distribution of these age groups, and indicates that migration was — for this crew, at least — a phenomenon involving the younger age groups, and that there was an important excess of females in the older age groups. More than one-half (295, or 53.3 percent) of the total crew was under 20 years of age; only one-fifth (110, or 21.9 percent) was in the 35 years-or-older group. The relative youth of the crew was not unexpected, since this has been found in earlier studies. (2).

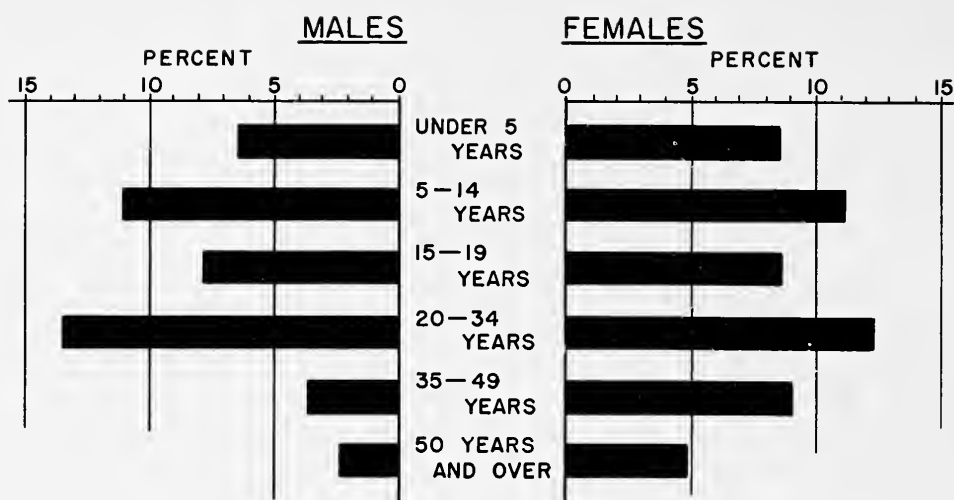


Figure 4. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE MIGRANTS STUDIED, BY SEX AND IMPORTANT AGE GROUPS.

**EDUCATION** The educational status of the 107 males and 145 females who were 20 years old or over was as follows:

	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
No schooling	12	5
1- 4 years	27	32
5- 8 years	62	94
9-12 years	6	14

The males had a mean educational status of 5.2 years, while that of the females was 5.5 years. It is entirely possible that these figures are misleading, since Negro schools in the South have until recent years held "short sessions," and could not be compared in either quantity or quality of offering with the schools for whites.<sup>3</sup>

Among the 61 males in the 5-14 age group, only 47 were in school; 53 of the 62 females in this age group were registered. The difference in proportion is accounted for in part by the fact that young Negro males enter the labor force at an earlier age than do females in the same age group. Also, a few of the 14 year-olds had not registered for the school year in which the project began.

Among the 100 children in school, 34 were at the normal grade for age, and one was one year ahead of his grade. Twenty-six were retarded one year, 14 two years, 17 three years, and 8 were four or more years behind their proper grade. Even when allowing one year of retardation as "normal," it is evident that school failure—for

<sup>3</sup>The Negro's tendency to provide "the best answer" probably operated here.

whatever reason — was not unusual among the migrants' children, since 39 percent were at least two years behind their age group in school.<sup>4</sup>

#### COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS

The 202 households in the crew ranged in size from 1 to 21 persons. The distribution was as follows:

<i>Size of household</i>	<i>Number</i>
Single person	113
Two persons	29
Three - five persons	33
Six - nine persons	20
Ten - fourteen persons	6
Fifteen or more persons	1

More than one-half of the households (113, or 55.9 percent) were "singles," and 12 of the 29 two-person households were composed of single individuals of the same sex who shared their economic and other resources. Eight of these consisted of two males, and four of two females. Only 77 households (38.1 percent), then, were composed of individuals having a family relationship.

The single-person households were not evenly distributed in the crew, however. Among the 103 households leaving Belle Glade, Florida, only 37 (35.9 percent) were in this category. Among the 52 households added during the first stay in Virginia, 39 (74.0 percent) were single-person, and 37 of the 44 (84.0 percent) added in New York were in this category.

The sex of the single-person householders is important in this connection. In the group of 37 leaving Belle Glade, 25 (67.5 percent) were *males*. Among the 39 added in Virginia, and the 37 entering in New York, however, the percentages are almost exactly reversed — 14 (35.9 percent) in Virginia and 12 (32.4 percent) in New York were males. Among the single-person households in the crew, the greater portion entered *while the crew was in the Stream*, and among these, single females were approximately twice as numerous as were single males.

<sup>4</sup>Even where migrant Negro children are "at grade" there is some question of their proper placement, since many school officials admit privately that they promote such children "to get them out of the way."

In the larger households (2 or more persons, and excluding the 12 two-persons-of-the-same-sex households) there were male heads in 45 and female heads in 32, as follows:

<i>Size of household</i>	<i>Male head</i>	<i>Female head</i>
Two persons	15	2
Three - five persons	15	18
Six - nine persons	12	8
Ten - fourteen persons	3	3
Fifteen or more persons	—	1

An analysis of the ages of the heads of households showed no significant differences between the sexes as to age. In general, for reasons to be discussed later, the single-person households were found in the younger age groups.

It is impossible to present adequate data regarding the "marital composition" of the 202 households. Much has been written of the mother-centered nature of the rural Negro family (3), and 32 were found to have the mother as the definite head. Among these "matricentric" households, 7 had a widow as the head. Nine others had no adult male present, and the remaining 16 practiced one or another form of "serial monogamy." This in some cases was a very brief *liaison*; in others, the "husband" stayed for weeks or months. In at least one household a "permanent" arrangement was continued while in Florida but another substituted while in Virginia and New York. This special arrangement had been continued for a number of years, and the nine year-old daughter reported that she liked her New York papa better than her Florida papa.

Among the 45 "patricentric" households (those with a male head), 22 were based upon legal marriage — some having framed licenses as evidence of the fact. In some households the man and woman had lived together for months or years; in others the arrangements were admittedly temporary, to be broken at will.

Four of the patricentric and 9 of the matricentric households included three generations; one of the latter, with 21 members, included a great-grandchild born while the crew was in New York. In all but two of these 13 households, the second-generation parent was a female; in two of the matricentric households a son had his wife and one or more children present but his mother was definitely head of the household.

**STABILITY** From the early days of the project it was evident that there were wide variations in the behavior of the households. No two were alike, and they varied in one or another way,

but there were apparent similarities and differences which indicated the existence of two general types of families, but no more detailed categories seem advisable. For practical purposes, these were termed "stable" and "unstable," and the major characteristics of each follow.

*The "stable" households.* In these the working members were industrious and conscientious. They saved money, and made some effort to prepare for times of unemployment. They prepared food systematically, kept their personal quarters orderly and clean, and did their laundry regularly. They gambled little, if at all, and did not drink excessively. They showed some concern for their children's welfare (where such were present), and made at least minimal efforts to have them attend school and church.

*The "unstable" households.* In these the working members were unreliable, and often had to be urged strongly to go into the fields. They rarely had any cash, borrowed from other migrants or from their employer whenever possible, frequently were inveterate gamblers and heavy drinkers. They were unclean in their habits, and generally disorderly. Where children were present in the household, they were fed and cared for in casual fashion, and the children's attendance at school was not of any particular concern.

Not all of these characteristics were present in every household, whether stable or unstable, but in general they were so often present as to appear to constitute patterns. The assignment of the households to these two categories, both by staff members and by independent readers of the case records, was as follows:

	<i>Stable</i>	<i>Unstable</i>
Patricentric	19	26
Matricentric	27	5
Two-person same-sex	2	10
Single male	25	26
Single female	21	41
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	94	108

It should be noted that slightly more than one-half (53.4 percent) were classed as unstable, but that among the matricentric households the stable outnumbered the unstable in a ratio of more than 5 to 1, that in the 62 single-female households there were twice as many unstable as stable households, and that in the 12 two-person same-sex households the unstable outnumbered the stable 5 to 1. These distributions will later be seen to be important.

## LEGAL RESIDENCE

The matter of legal residence is especially important in the case of the Negro migrant laborer, since his right to avail himself of many public services in Florida is directly dependent upon his status as a resident. Among the 236 adults 21 years of age or older, only 19 (8.0 percent) could legally meet the requirements for voting residence, and only 11 of these could have met the residence requirement for one or another form of public assistance.

Equally important is the fact that legal residence, as a concept, was understood by only one-fifth of the householders questioned on this point. To most of the respondents, in the words of one,

All I knows is I lives in Belle Glade in the winter. . . . I ain't stayed nowhere a year sence I's left Georgia. I never voted nowhere, and ain't fixin' to, but the [welfare] lady sez I ain't no resident of Florida. I don't know nothin' 'bout these things, so I don't know if I'm a resident of nowhere.

Knowingly or not, this respondent described his status in the last words — "a resident of nowhere."

## HEALTH

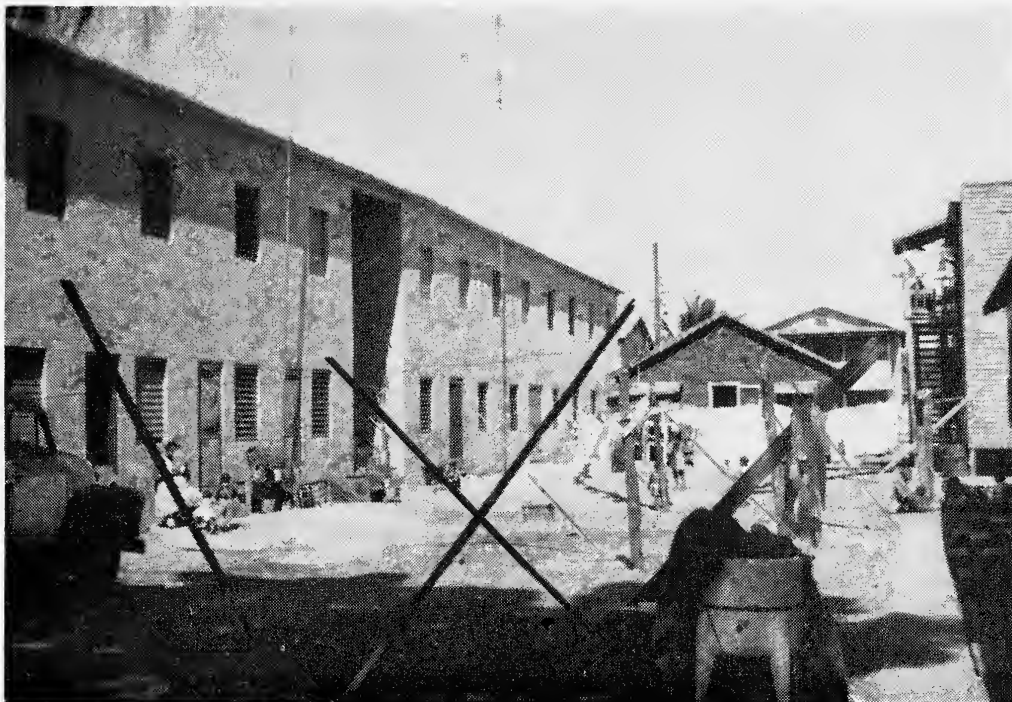
One of the efforts of the project was to ascertain the history of major illnesses, and to assess the physical condition of the migrants, in this crew. Any morbidity or other rates would be meaningless in a study such as this, and have not been calculated. Some of the findings will be discussed in a later chapter. Here only a general statement will be made, and it is that of the Medical Officer assigned to the project by the Communicable Disease Center of the United States Public Health Service:

From the medical histories and from the physical examinations we have been able to make, it appears that these [migrants] are no different from other people of comparable race, economic level, and social background. . . . I have been particularly impressed with the physical condition of those I have examined. They appear to be in very good health and to have no exceptional frequencies of either acute or chronic conditions.

This is not to say, of course, that there were no health problems and no acute or chronic illnesses, but insofar as could be determined, these were not disproportionately present.

## HOUSING

In Palm Beach County, Florida, the crew members lived in a variety of housing units. At one extreme are the well-kept single homes and multiple-unit dwellings in the Okeechobee Camp, maintained by the Belle Glade Housing Authority and occupied



"Some of us lives in nice places when we has the money . . .



. . . but some of us has to live in shacks, even if we has got money."

by agricultural workers. At the other extreme are substandard shacks, lacking any facilities and renting for whatever the traffic will bear. In between these two, there are too many types of housing to allow description. There are growers' camps set off from town in the fields, "hotels," multiple-unit and single houses; some of these meet housing and sanitation standards while others are constantly in trouble because of their violation.

The best single index of housing conditions for the migrants is the degree of overcrowding. (Any of the standard appraisal forms were inadequate or too difficult to administer.) The distribution of the 103 households constituting the crew as it left Belle Glade was as follows:

1 person per room or less	11
1.1 - 2.0 per room	31
2.1 - 4.0 per room	45
4.1 - 6.0 per room	13
6.1 - 10.0 per room	2
10.1 or more per room	1 <sup>5</sup>

If 2 persons or less per room is accepted as a minimum housing standard — and this is twice the usually accepted minimum — 61 households (59.2 percent) were overcrowded.<sup>6</sup>

Twenty-four of the households were housed in Okeechobee Camp, and 11 more in housing of comparable quality. The remaining 68 were scattered throughout the western end of Palm Beach County, and lived under a variety of conditions.

Sixteen of these 103 households paid no rent, receiving some form of housing from a grower, packer, or other employer in return for labor. Among the remaining 87, 10 paid less than \$2.50 per week; 30 paid from \$2.50 to \$4.99; the remaining 47 paid more than \$5.00 per week. The average rent paid by the 87 households was \$5.06 per week.

Sixty-one of these households left no belongings in Palm Beach County when the crew set out on its trip to Virginia and New York. Twenty-three left some items in storage with friends or relative, and 19 paid some rent to hold their quarters until their return and to have a place in which to leave household items.<sup>7</sup> The items ranged

<sup>5</sup> In this household 4 adults and 7 children occupied 1 room 8' x 16' containing 3 double beds. Three of the children slept on a blanket under a bed, the other 4 in one single bed.

<sup>6</sup> There were no significant differences in housing reported by the households joining the crew at a later date. They are therefore not discussed in any detail.

<sup>7</sup> The local Housing Authority charges only a minimum "summer rent" to those migrants who desire to hold their quarters while they are in the stream.



from stoves and refrigerators, owned by a few households, to miscellaneous clothing and odds-and-ends.

**RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Religion appeared to play a relatively unimportant part in the life of the crew studied. Only 39 (14.3 percent) of the households reported affiliation with an *established* religious group. This is not the extent of religious activity, however. During the winter months, Florida communities with large migrant populations experience an influx of itinerant, part-time Negro evangelists who set up tents, use empty stores or buildings, or hold meetings in the streets or on vacant lots. The emotionally-charged atmosphere of the meetings appeals to many Negroes, and there is considerable attendance. Whether such attendance is religious or recreational is open to question, but many of the crew members took some part in this type of activity.

**REASONS FOR ENTERING THE STREAM** Analysis of the interview data showed that there were 4 major reasons given by the householders for becoming an agricultural migrant laborer, as follows:

Lost farm job (tenant or sharecropper) in home state -----	161 <sup>8</sup>
Became old enough to support self but could find no work to do in home community--	31
Did not like home community and wanted to get away from it -----	12
Liked idea of being able to support self while moving from place to place -----	8

These findings appear to refute the generally-held idea that the migrants are a group with "itchy feet," that is, unable to stay in one place. A summary statement by the Negro participant observer throws some light on the migrant's reasons for being in their present situations.

After living with these [households], I can safely say that very few are in the work because they want to be. Most of the adults are migrants because their home communities no longer have work available to them. . . . Among those 30 and over, most are displaced persons. . . . There are simply no jobs of the kind they have known all their lives.

<sup>8</sup>This group included matricentric households where the "husband" had been the major worker, and had left the household after moving from the farm.

Among the younger migrants, I have found that they grew up to find no jobs available to them, and to find also that their parents were having to leave the land. . . . Some of the younger ones wanted to leave a home community they did not like, and some just wanted to travel, but these are very few compared to the number who *had* to leave home in order to eat.

LENGTH OF TIME IN STREAM                      The number of years the householders had been in the Atlantic Coast Stream varied greatly. For 23, it was the first experience, but 12 of these were recruited in Georgia under special circumstances to be discussed later. The other 11 in this group had entered Florida within the past six months, had worked during the winter, and were now moving with a crew for the first time.

The number of years in the stream reported by the 202 householders was as follows:

First year	23
1 - 2 years in past	62
3 - 4 years in past	43
5 - 6 years in past	31
7 - 9 years in past	19
10 or more years in past	24

Among the 117 householders who had been in the stream more than two years, there were 17 (14.5 percent) who had remained in Florida one or more summers after making their first trip. As will be seen later, this number would be considerably larger were there job opportunities in Florida during the summer months.

The average number of years spent in the stream by all migrants 25 years of age or older was 4.7 years.

## THE MIGRANT IN THE FLORIDA COMMUNITY

When in the Atlantic Coast Stream the Negro migrant's position in whatever community he finds himself is likely to be one of isolation. He lives in a camp which is usually remote from a village or city; he is most often a necessary but unwelcomed "outsider," so far as the permanent residents are concerned. In contrast, in Florida (where he spends a third or more of the year) he is more likely to live in Belle Glade, Pahokee, or some other community than in an isolated camp. He is, therefore, much more a participating member



"Some of us has nice houses the guv'm't lets us rent; some others . . .



. . . lives in these houses in the camp."

of the community — whether accepted as such or not by the permanent residents. It is important, then, that something be known of his position in the Florida community, both in relation to white and to other Negroes, if his problems are to be understood.

The Negro in Florida, as in other southern states, is separated from the white population by a sharply drawn caste line. This is set and enforced both by law and by custom, and need not be discussed in any detail. Within his own racial group, however, there are sharply defined attitudes regarding social status, and the Negro migrant's relation to his fellows has some bearing upon the way he meets his problems.

A special effort was made, through interviews with a cross section of the total Negro population, to learn of the stratification of Negro life in Belle Glade, Florida.

In the opinion of the Negroes themselves, the Negro community consists of five strata or social classes,<sup>9</sup> only two of which ordinarily include migrants (see Figure 5). These may be described as follows:

- Class I.* Numerically small, this class includes such individuals as the physician, the undertaker, the school principal, and the ministers of the "established" Negro churches, together with a few "well-fixed," property-owning business men.
- Class II.* Somewhat larger in number, this class includes the teachers, nurses, supervisory personnel, owners and managers of small businesses.
- Class III.* Still larger in size, this class works with its hands, but in the more permanent jobs afforded by the town's few industries, and in the jobs which demand some training or skill. Housing is permanent for this group, and a very small portion of the migrant group is considered to be in this class because "they care enough to keep a house the year around."
- Class IV.* This social class is the largest, comprising (from Negro estimates) about 75 to 80 percent of the total winter population. A small portion of this class does not migrate, but floats from job to job in the community, and has little to do (by mutual decision) with the members

---

<sup>9</sup>The "social classes" discussed here are entirely within the Negro community, and are not comparable with classes in the dominant white community. The accompanying schematic representation of classes in the Negro community is *not intended to show proportion of the total population.*

of the upper three classes. Most of the migrants are considered to be members of this class.

*Class V.* This numerically small group is popularly termed "the vultures." "They live not by sweat but by guile"; they are the bootleggers, the gamblers, "the fast-buck boys" (and girls). They are truly migrant, and tend to appear in the community only when the migrants are present in force. From all evidence, some turn up at one point or another in the Atlantic Coast Stream during the migration period, but most simply disappear until the next season.

Each of these classes tends to have its own definitions of acceptable behavior, and the members of each have traditions, folkways, and problems in common. The effect of this class membership will be seen to be powerful in determining the ways in which the migrants perceive and meet their problems.

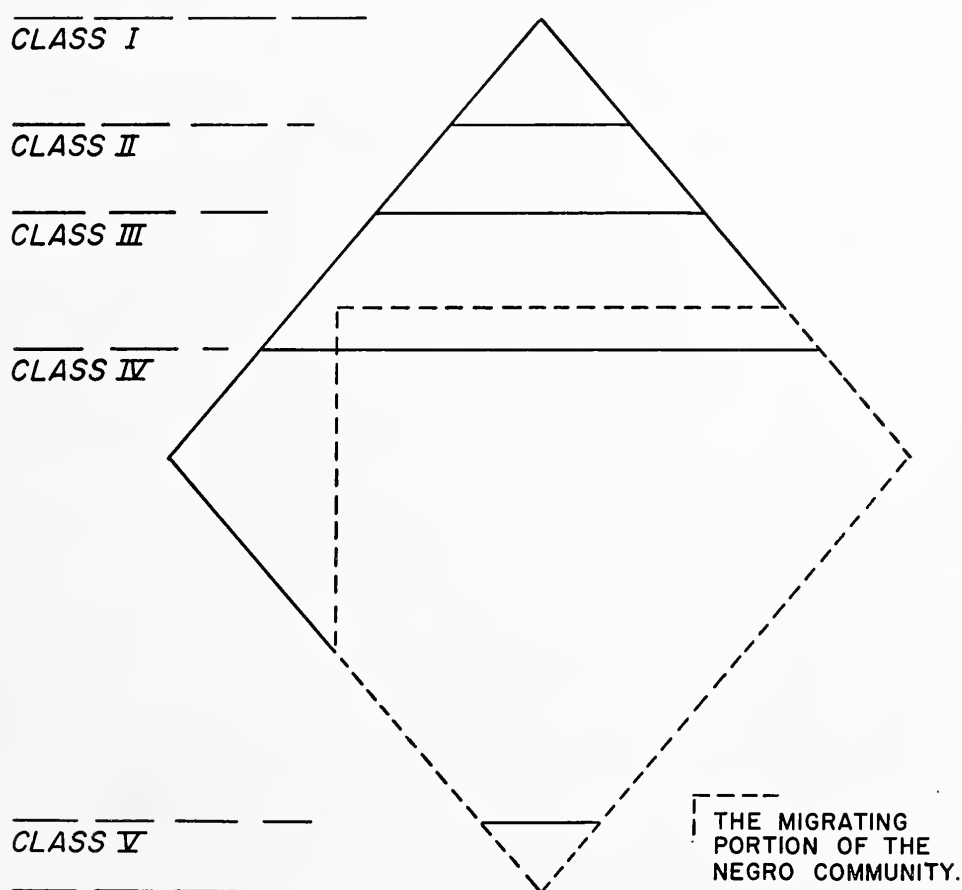


Figure 5. SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE CLASS STRUCTURE OF THE NEGRO POPULATION (RESIDENT AND MIGRANT) IN BELLE GLADE, FLORIDA.

## PROBLEMS OF THE MIGRANT

The preceding chapters serve as background for the real concern of this report, that is, the problems which the migrants encountered during the twelve months of observation. Equally important, however, is a discussion of the circumstances under which the problems occurred, of the steps taken to meet the problems, and — wherever possible — of the major cultural and social forces which helped to create the problems and to dictate the steps taken to solve them.

### FACTORS INFLUENCING THE MIGRANT'S BEHAVIOR

The migrant's behavior, like that of any human being, results from the interaction of a number of forces upon whatever characteristics and abilities he has at birth. One of these forces is the culture he shares — the ideas, ideals, attitudes, and behavior patterns which constitute his "pattern of life"; a second is the expectations of the group in which he currently finds himself; a third is the unique experiences he has had thus far in his development. All three of these are in constant interaction, and result in his having certain perceptions of himself and of his situation. What he can and should do about his situation in terms of these perceptions is of course constantly being modified by the pressures which confront him from day to day.

While these forces which so largely determine human behavior operate in the lives of all men, they appear to function in the life of the Negro agricultural migrant in a peculiarly aggravating way. Little in his past has prepared him for his present situation; he is now a member of a constantly shifting group (both in terms of place and of people); his unique experiences have rarely helped to give him any *positive* perceptions of himself and/or his situation. Living in one con-

tinuing culture in one place in one group gives some stability to life for most men. The Negro agricultural migrant has the benefit of none of these. His problems, and his reactions to them, must be viewed in terms of this explanation of his behavior.

## THE PROBLEMS

Each of the following sections will be devoted to one of the areas in which these migrants faced problems during the time they were observed. Because of the difficulties inherent in studying migrants no claim is made that all of the problems were uncovered, nor that all of the ways in which the problems were met have been observed. The intent, therefore, is to discuss major aspects of the problems (and the factors contributing to them) rather than to present frequencies. Wherever possible the reports of the Negro participant observer are used verbatim to indicate the important aspects of the problems.

**ENTERING THE STREAM**                      Some important reason for the migrant's leaving his home community have already been discussed. For most of the migrants, as was shown, there are economic and related to basic changes in the agricultural economy of the South. There were practical problems, however, which have not been mentioned heretofore. One of these was the relative informality of the hiring process. While it is regularized to some extent, in that labor contractors and crew leaders have special times when they hire migrants in Belle Glade and other Florida communities, the migrant first moving into the Atlantic Coast Stream usually does so in one of three ways. One is to accept the "invitation" of the small posters which are sometimes placed in rural communities in Georgia and other states. These offer employment in general terms, although a specific grower or contractor is usually named, and the Negro migrant's acute need for work leads him "to pack up and get out," with the community mentioned in the poster as his goal. Whether he completes the trip or not depends upon his resources and upon whether or not he finds employment *en route*. About two thirds of the householders in the crew studied entered the stream in this way. The participant observer reported a typical case in these words.

This family was forced off the land through the combining of five "mule-and-nigger" farms into one, with only one instead of five households in permanent residence. The husband saw a card in the general store which offered employment at Homestead, Florida. Two of the displaced families combined resources and travelled southward in a 1940 Dodge. When they reached central Florida (being almost

without resources) they began to look for work. After having an occasional day's work along the way, they reached Belle Glade, where the harvest season was at its height. Employment opportunities were sufficiently good that they abandoned the idea of going on to Homestead. *They did not realize that employment would not be year-around, and found it necessary to enter the stream when the Florida harvest was over.*

A second way of entering the migrant agricultural stream is through informal channels of communication, in which those who have left home earlier indicate that opportunities exist in Florida (or in an upstream state). If the need to leave home is sufficiently great, any reasonable chance of finding employment is attractive, whether promising or not.

One family was told at the end of the growing season in South Carolina that it would have to move because the farm had been sold. A brother has been in the stream for some years, and through an exchange of letters, promised to help in getting work. The family knew that there were periods of unemployment, but even part-time work held more promise than did the prospect of no work in South Carolina.

A third way of entering the stream is *via* direct recruitment in the home community. While the crew was in Virginia on its trip up the stream, a shortage of labor was solved by sending a truck into a Georgia community. The woman driver was paid \$3 a head for all workers recruited, and she recruited (for the most part) single individuals of both sexes. Minnie and Washington are examples of this group.

This 19 and 17 year-old brother and sister team had to leave home because their mother could no longer support them. There was little work to be had in \_\_\_\_\_ Georgia by people of their age, and the coming of the truck was a godsend. Neither had any idea of what lay ahead; there was an opportunity to work and to get away from the community where no employment appeared possible in the future, so they took it.

This community was visited at a later date, and the Negro vocational teacher in the high school had this to say:

These young ones don't know what they're getting into. I was here when that truck come, and that woman (the truck driver) sure told them a story about what they'd earn over there (in Virginia and New York). We got a lot of kids here won't git no jobs. Everything's mixed up here — no jobs, no nothing, except some in January



and April. . . . This promised a lot we ain't got here, so they took off. . . . They ain't none of them showed up here again, neither.

While it is probably out of place, the end result of this entrance into the stream may well be given here. After the crew returned to Virginia from New York, the Negro participant observer had the following to report.

The youngsters who came in the truck from Georgia are especially unhappy. They haven't saved any money, and don't care much for the work (harvesting potatoes) they are doing now. But they are suddenly realizing that the summer is about over, and that there is no place to go but Florida, and they are learning that there won't be work there for a while. They can't go back home; they say there's nothing there for them. Some made an excursion to Baltimore last week looking for some way to get out of this life, but they came back pretty glum. There's just no place for them. . . . Two of them stayed in Utica but couldn't find work. They came back last week.

This sense of being caught in a trap was neither unusual nor confined to those recruited from Georgia directly. One hundred and thirty-six of the householders reported that one of the things they disliked most about migrant life was the fact that once in it, there was no readily-apparent way in which they could get out.

**EMPLOYMENT**                      Whether to "go North" or not is a question which faces the migrant each year. Another is with whom to go. Certain crew leaders — those who have poor records as to the treatment of their workers, or who hire out to growers who provide inadequate housing facilities or bad working conditions — have difficulty in recruiting workers. Despite the informal nature of the processes of communication in Belle Glade and other Florida communities, word "just gets around" about certain crew leaders, both good and bad. Leaders are necessarily highly competitive in their hiring, and sometimes have to resort to "raiding" while in the stream if a full complement of workers is to be had.

The employer of this crew had a highly-favorable reputation in this respect. He also offered day-haul employment in Belle Glade, and was not only considered honest and fair, but also had the reputation of "heppin' out" if "his people" "got in a fix" when no work was available. Among the 202 householders in the crew, 147 had either worked for him or knew his favorable reputation; and hence either started from Belle Glade with him or joined the crew while in the stream. Sixteen of these joined not because they wanted to go but "because Mr. B — needs me." Nine others owed him money advanced in time of illness or for other reasons, and continued with him for that reason.

In many cases the decision "to go North" was not finally made until radio announcements stated that "Mr. B — is forming a crew which will depart on —." Small recruiting cards were also passed out. Actually, no one knew at any point prior to departure who would be in the crew. Later interviews indicated the reasons for this uncertainty. In the participant observer's words,

Hope apparently springs eternal in the human breast, so far as many migrants are concerned. In perhaps half of the households I find that they *hope* that they can stay in Belle Glade during the summer months. . . . But they can't find work, although from what they say I don't think they try very hard, and so at the last minute they go. . . . This may not be the usual pattern, because in the L — crew (in which interviews were made in search of contrasts) they join up in April and almost always show up to travel on June 10.

It was stated earlier that the weather, climate, and current market prices all affect the migrant's chances of having work. There was ample evidence that all of these operated at one time or another in the course of the year. The February "cold spell" in Florida created a situation in which very little work was available for almost two weeks. A period of dry weather in New York reduced the bean crop so that there was only about 10 per cent of normal work for more than a week, while heavy rains stopped work in the potato fields in Virginia for five days. At one point, there was no work in Virginia for 3 days because the market price for beans did not warrant picking them.

It was impossible, also, to plan the travel of the crew so that available work and available labor coincided. No beans were ready when the crew arrived in Virginia on the trip up the stream, despite the best efforts of the grower and the labor contractor to plan adequately. To have some income in the three-day period before a crop was ready, three migrants "formed informal crews and went out to pick beans on their own. They had to because they had no money and (the contractor) had not arrived to lend them any." This practice, incidentally, is discouraged by contractors and growers whenever possible because such "crews" may be enticed into other camps.

Another employment problem is related directly to the worker's own concept of his needs. Members of the "stable" households not only felt the need to work and to save money, but also appeared to have a sense of responsibility to the employer. In the "unstable" households, however, there were no such compulsions to work. As long as there was money for food, and often liquor and gambling, the latter group saw no special reason to work — and often had to be "urged" into the fields.

In this connection it is well to point up the problem of "Social

Security.” Migrant laborers are covered (theoretically) by OASI, and all but a few had social security numbers. The whole concept of social security appeared, however, to be quite hazy in the minds of most migrants. The participant observer gave the following summary.

Most of our people don't have any clear idea of what it is all about. They resent having money taken out of their pay, and don't see that they'll ever get anything back. . . . They think of it as “welfare,” and don't believe that welfare workers ever do anything for them. . . . Also they are afraid that it is a way of finding out how much they earn, and they don't want anything to do with income taxes. . . .

One important part of this whole picture is the fact that all but the day workers are paid by ticket — so much for each basket of beans or sack of potatoes. These tickets are good as cash, and are used at the store, the filling station, or for gambling. . . . One worker may cash a hundred dollars worth of tickets, and another three dollars worth, but they may have earned the same amount in the field. They aren't going to have social security deducted under these circumstances if they can help it.

Crew leaders and growers are very often uncooperative in the matter of OASI payments. They recognize the difficulty in collecting from the workers, and some refuse to pay their own share.

In the words of one grower:

If you think I'm going to pay these niggers for working, and then pay social security to the government, too, you're crazy. In the first place, they don't want it — all they want is to be taken care of. In the second, the way they drink it up and gamble, you don't know whether you're paying social security for the right ones or not. And in the third place, I'm not going to pay social security unless everybody else does, too, and most of them I know aren't paying, so the hell with the whole business.

This matter of OASI payments can hardly be considered a major problem for these migrants. As the participant observer's report indicated above, “most . . . don't have any clear idea of what it is all about.” The basic assumption of the social security program were unknown to most of them, and their whole cultural pattern has been such that the concepts of security in old age, of retirement, and of independence are foreign to their thinking. Also, the migrant is very often so accustomed to a subordinate relationship to his white employer that it would not occur to him to challenge his employer's right to defy the provisions of the law — if he knew what those provisions were.

It is impossible even to list all of the facets of the employment prob-

lem here, but one further aspect must be mentioned. Again in the participant observer's words,

After being with this crew this long I can say that the biggest problem seems to be the demands of the job. These people are used (in the past) to working at their own pace, and not in large groups. . . . In the crew the work has to be done when the crop is ready, and has to be done fast. If it is the second time over the field, the picking isn't as easy or as good; always some rows are better than others. . . . Under such conditions, their response to the demands of the job are uneven. They may get discouraged, or they scrap with each other about little things like taking each other's rows. . . . To add it all up, the job demands more of some of them than they are prepared to give, so they take the easiest way out, and work only when they have to. . . . In one sense, it is a good thing money isn't important to some of them; they'd be very unhappy if they had to "push" all of the time.

The best "guesstimate" that could be made of the *average* earnings of the crew members was about \$5.00 *per day worked*. This is not from Metzler's report that the average for all migrants studied in Belle Glade in 1953 was \$4.99 (2). (The participant observer reported his own average earnings, *having worked whenever any work was available*, to have been \$6.22.) That it *was* possible to earn and save money is shown by the fact that one migrant household (2 adult workers) sent a total of \$640 in postal funds to Belle Glade for safekeeping while in the stream. The participant observer reported, however, that about one-half of the workers had no money at the end of the season when they were ready to leave Virginia for Florida.

PROBLEMS IN TRAVELING                      The crew travelled from Belle Glade on the labor contractor's trucks, one of them containing such personal effects as the migrants elected to bring. The latter included footlockers, metal suitcases, cardboard boxes, three oil stoves, brooms, mops, three congoleum rugs, four ironing boards, baby strollers, mattresses, card tables, washtubs, and so on. Five households travelled in their own cars in the caravan; three of these were supplied with gasoline enroute.

Each person was given \$3 for food *en route* and for passage on the ferry from Norfolk to the Eastern Shore. Some of the migrant's problems in travelling can best be understood from an abstract of the record of the trip as supplied by the white field worker.

Left Belle Glade at 8:45 p.m. . . . At 11:00 p.m., stopped at Fort Pierce for a meal, but were told by the proprietor of the diner to

move on. . . . At 1:10 a.m. stopped in Melbourne for gas, but crew members were not allowed to use the toilets. . . . At 1:55 a.m., made a "bathroom stop" in a woods. . . . At 6:20 a.m., bought cold meat, bread, and soft drinks at a country store outside Daytona Beach. . . . 12:00 noon, stopped for drinking water at a spring near Darien, Georgia. Water full of sulphur. . . . State troopers followed trucks through Richmond Hill; not permitted to stop. . . . At 8:00 p.m. stopped in Bay Harbor, South Carolina, for meat, drinks, and so on, at a country store. State troopers made crew stay with trucks during stop. One trooper stayed in store while purchases were being made. . . . At 3:00 a.m., one and one-half hour stop for sleep. State troopers stayed nearby for entire time. . . . At 7:45 a.m. (second morning) took ferry. Police watched crew while waiting for boat. Not allowed to move outside ferry house. . . . At 11:00 a.m., crew arrived in (grower's) camp.

The opportunities for purchasing hot food and for using toilet facilities while on the move were more limited in the southern states than in Pennsylvania and New York, but rigid police supervision was encountered throughout the trip. Interviews by the writer with crew leaders and with both state police and local police officials indicates a general distrust of the agricultural migrant as he travels.



"When I gits home at night I's jus' too tired to straighten up."

(In some instances this supervision has a very practical value, in that migrants can be "detained" by local police until the crew has moved on, after which they are released to work for local growers.)

Migrants who moved in their own cars and not as part of the caravan had considerable trouble. In all but one of the 27 households which moved independent of the crew, trouble was reported en route. The cars were rarely new, and less often in good condition. Twelve of the 26 reported spending more than \$25 in repairs *en route*; one left Belle Glade with \$70 in cash but arrived in camp with less than a dollar—having had to pay for welding a broken frame, two new tires, and a new distributor on the way. One household had no money for repairs and left the car with relatives in South Carolina—borrowing enough money to get to Virginia by bus.

**SECURITY**                      Eighty-seven (43.6 per cent) of the 202 households carried one or another form of insurance during some part of the year they were observed. Eleven of these were policies paid on a monthly or quarterly basis; the other 76 were small "industrial" policies on which weekly premium payments were made. Again, the participant observer's report is revealing.

From all I can learn, the migrant knows that he has little chance of getting help if he goes to "the welfare lady." Many of the people in camp told of having sought help (in Florida), before the crops came in and after they came back from the North, but no one reported that he or she had been "hepped." . . . Two reasons were apparently given for not helping them. One was the lack of legal residence, which is a confusing idea to most of these people. The other was their earning too much money, for the fact that they may have earned \$40 two weeks before seemed to mean to the welfare worker that they were not in need at the time of application. . . . I found no one in this group who really understood the meaning of being a resident of the state.

In this crew, at least, the greatest security achieved was that afforded by the labor contractor. His willingness to lend money (sometimes with very small chance of having it repaid) afforded the migrant exactly the same dependency relationship he had earlier maintained with white employers, and he used it whenever possible. This dependency upon the white man, whether contractor, straw-boss, or any other person with whom the migrants came into contact, was noted in these words by the Negro participant observer.

One of the outstanding characteristics of these workers is, to me, their "Uncle Tom" attitude toward any white person they have

contacts with. . . . It is almost a slave-owner way of behaving on their part, and certainly different from the northern urban Negroes I know. . . . I think they sometimes got out of their way to ask favors they don't really need, just to be sure that they can know that somebody is looking after them. They seem to have no independence or ability to be alone here. . . . There are a few who are always mad at any white man, but they are only a small minority in this crew.

If this observation is correct, and there seems little reason to question it, it is one more important evidence of the effect of the migrant's "hometown culture" in determining how he will act in the migrant agricultural labor force.

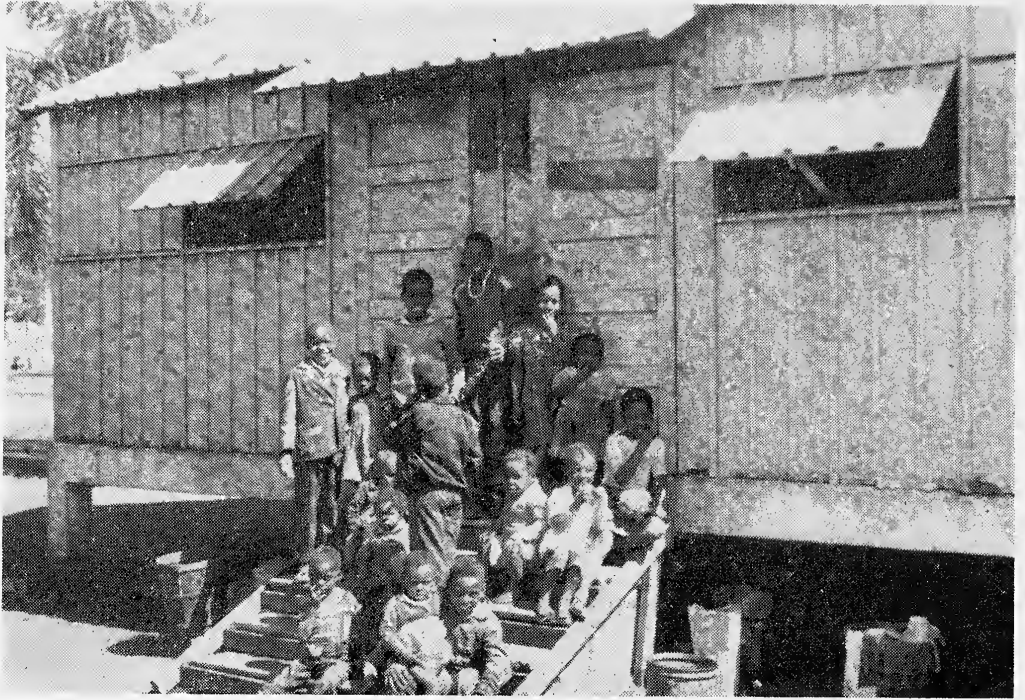
**HOUSING**            There was a sharp difference in the housing of these migrants in Florida and in the stream. In Florida he sought his own housing, lived where he chose and with whom he chose, and moved if his surroundings became unsatisfactory. In the stream, both in Virginia and in New York, he lived in quarters provided by the grower. These were some distance from urban areas, were compact, and he had no choice but to live in the camp.

In Florida there were clashes between individuals, but these ordinarily occurred in bars or other gathering places, and were between individuals who are not constantly in contact with each other. Despite the efforts of the camp manager to keep peace, 14 fights of more than casual dimensions were noted. Two of these resulted in cuttings which required medical attention; two others involved beatings of such severity that the individuals were forced to leave the camp.

The elemental nature of the migrant's life is revealed in these occurrences. In some instances, they involved possession of a woman (see section on marital problems *infra*); in others, they were the result of too many people trying to live in too little space. In the participant observer's words,

When people are cooped up in a small space the way they are here, tempers often get ragged, and fast! . . . I think the only thing that keeps them from fighting more often is that they might be thrown out of camp or arrested. As it is, there are a lot of little quarrels, and once in a while a big one. . . . Things that happen in the field or the cookhouse cause a lot of trouble. One thinks he gets worse rows to pick than another, so he wants to fight about it. Or one thinks some of his food is missing, so he blames whoever he happens to have handy. . . . Some of the women are trouble makers, too, especially the single ones from Georgia, because they fight over men.





Day Care — In Florida

"If'n you got to work in the fields, you jus' leaves the chil'n the best you can."

In this crew, at least, there is quite a bit of "trading" women or men as sleeping partners, and this has some of them on edge all of the time.

In Virginia, the officials apparently made little effort to supervise the camp. In New York, however, the state troopers made visits to migrant camps at any hour of the day or night. The result of this supervision was described by the participant observer in these words.

There was much more trouble in camp in Virginia than in New York. The state police in New York showed up at unexpected times, and a lot of fights didn't quite come off because the "cops" might show up. . . . Everyone in camp seemed to believe that if the troopers picked them up, they would be locked up for the remainder of the year. . . . The people who drank heavily and gambled made sure that they were behaving when that car drove in. . . . Considering the way they have to live in camp and what they've been used to, the amount of lawbreaking didn't seem exceptional. The fact that the people are so concentrated in one small area makes the problem look bigger.

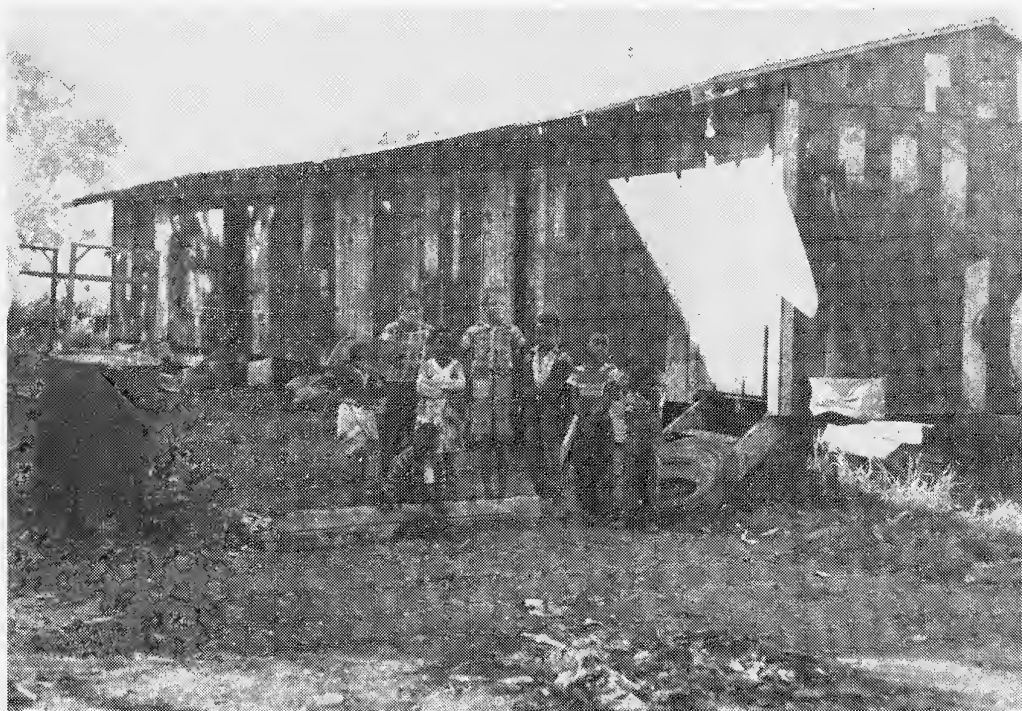
One other problem associated with housing, whether in Florida or in the stream, was that of privacy. While the housing available to the migrant before he entered the stream was probably not the best, he reported that he did live in a family unit, with some sense of privacy.



Except in a minority of housing units, migrant quarters were such that people "lived in each other's laps." There was little choice in the quarters available, and in many cases migrants had to make living arrangements that prevented the household (family) from being a unit in their living. This was especially true in those households with five or more members, for most migrant housing has no quarters for the unified living of this many people (see accompanying illustrations).

**CARE OF CHILDREN** One of the important problems of migrant life, whether in Florida or in the stream, appeared to be that of caring for the small children. Even though paternal identification is not always possible — nor, sometimes considered important — in this group, the child is valued for himself (3). In the pattern *peculiar to this Negro subculture* there is a feeling of responsibility for him and of concern about his welfare. To be sure, this pattern is quite different from that of white people and the sense of responsibility and concern are less rigid and demanding. Nevertheless, they *are* present. The need for some child-care facility is especially great because of the mother's need to work.

There were very few facilities available to migrant mothers for day-care of their children, either in Florida or in the stream. Much publicity is given to those maintained by church groups, but in all fairness it must be said that they are too few and too expensive to be available



— And In The Stream

"Mos'ly we goes in the fields, but sometimes we jus' stays in camp by us and plays."

to many migrants. The cost to the migrant, even though there is some subsidy, is in the neighborhood of \$.75 per day, and the mother with two or three children is simply unable to pay for adequate care. As a result, "day care" is often given by old women who are no longer able to work in the fields for a minimum fee; the amount of supervision given in such cases is negligible, and the quality of care is best left undescribed.

Where there are older children in the household, the responsibility for the small children is often placed upon them, to their own detriment. In one household, for example, the 11 year-old daughter was absent from school 41 days out of 85 because the mother had to work and could not afford to pay a day-care center's fees for her three children under 6. A description of her activities for one week will serve to show the problem.

*Sunday*: picked 6 baskets of beans, earned \$3.60.

*Monday*: no work available in Belle Glade; paid \$ .50 for her transportation by truck to "the coast," where the crop was poor. Picked 3 baskets, earned \$1.80.

*Tuesday*: rained, no work. *Wednesday*: picked 4 baskets of beans, earned \$2.40. No more work available that day. *Thursday*: picked 5 baskets of beans, earned \$3.00; transportation cost, \$ .50; *Friday*: picked 8 baskets of beans (in 11 hours in the field), earned \$4.80. *Saturday*: "chopped" peppers in field for 12 hours, earned \$6.00.

The total earnings for the week (less transportation costs) with which to support herself and her four children, were \$20.60. The cost of day-care for the three young children for the four days when the 11 year-old should have been in school, would have been not less than \$6.00. When the rent (\$6.50 per week), food, clothing, and other expenses were subtracted from her earnings, it was clearly impossible — in this mother's mind, at least — to do anything but keep the 11 year-old at home. (Whether or not the children would receive proper food and care from the older child is quite another question.)

In those households where several adults worked, this problem was less acute, but it was probably the most-generally recognized problem with which the migrant household was confronted in Florida.

In the stream, the situation was somewhat different. The camp was a compact unit some distance from other camps or a town, and the care of children could be shared more easily. Two patterns of behavior were found. One was to leave the small children in camp under the care of an older child or of one of the women not working in the field. A second was to take the children into the field and allow them to help

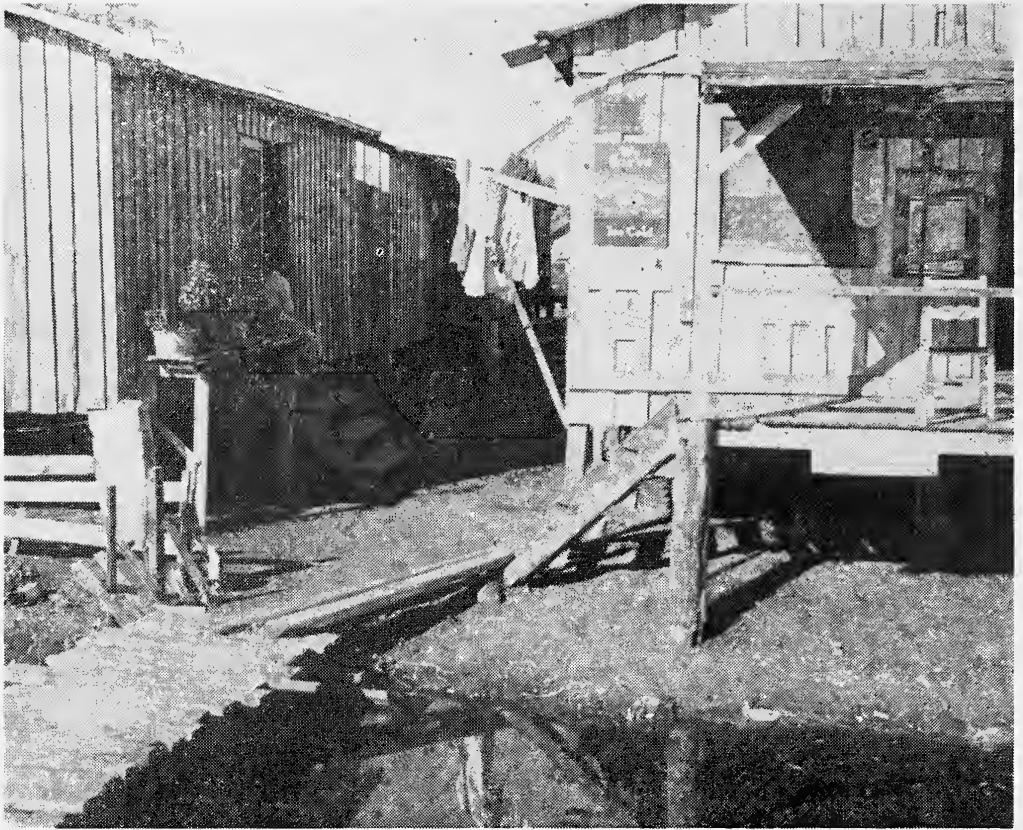
with the work. The latter practice was most generally adopted. This practice leads to much condemnation of migrants, labor contractors, and growers. Many social workers, those interested in preventing child labor, and others consider such behavior as exploitation of the child. In actual practice, at least in this crew, it sounds much worse than it really was. Both the writer and the field workers made special efforts to observe the effect upon the child of his being in the field. In the participant observer's words,

This matter of kids working is emphasized too much. The kids are in the field with their mothers and they pick some beans — even the little ones. But they don't pick very long at a time. Their attention wanders, and they wander off to the edge of the field to play with other kids their own age. . . . Everybody in the crew seems to look after them, and if they get tired they take a nap. . . . I've watched them carefully, and have never seen a child work more than a half hour at a time, and then not very hard. They play together, sleep, eat often, and seem to have a good time in general. . . . It's unfair to say that they *work* in the fields. My guess is that they are better off with their mothers (and fathers) than if they stay around the camp.

(It is interesting to note that inspectors from state labor departments rarely find young children in the fields when they make inspection trips. The migrants are aware of regulations, and the approach of an inspector's car is a signal for all youngsters to disappear into the adjoining woods or fields — which they do with remarkable facility.)

Feeding the children in the field was no more of a problem than that of feeding the adults. The migrant child was so generally accepted by the crew *in toto* that his presence in both field and camp appeared to pose no special problem. This is probably one of the "saving graces" of migrant life for the small child.

**EDUCATION**        The education of the child may or may not constitute a problem for the migrant household. Whether or not education is high in the values system of the migrant depends upon a variety of factors which have not yet been identified. It was readily apparent, however, that there was a wide variation in the attitudes regarding school attendance. At one extreme were the two households which left the crew in New York in order to have their children enter school on time in Florida even though this probably meant that there would be little or no work for some weeks. At the other extreme were the households in which no plans were made for the return of the children to school in Florida until such time as the whole household arrived there — in late October. Even then, in some of the latter, the children enrolled in school only when they "got around to it," or when the school made special efforts to enroll them.



"Six dollar a week is what these costs us."

## CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

Three traffic-law violations, four jail sentences for drunkenness, and one arrest for gambling constituted the known violations of law by the migrants during the year. From this experience it is impossible to confirm or to deny the stereotype of the migrant as "a lawless, good-for-nothing, shiftless, thieving, chicken-stealing black rascal" — the description volunteered by a mid-stream county official. The participant observer's statement was as follows:

There doesn't seem to be any more "crime" among the crew members than I have seen in the same kind of people in a city up North. There is no way of measuring it, but the only difference appears to be that here (in Virginia) a migrant is a very special person in the eyes of the police, and so he gets special "attention" if he violates a law. In the city the same offense would be less startling and less noticed. . . . Here (the migrant) does something, and a big thing is made of it in court. They throw the book at him — if it was anybody but a migrant, they wouldn't pay much attention.

That the migrant is singled out for "special" attention by police

and the courts is not unlikely. A police magistrate indicated this in the following words.

We don't give them a chance to make trouble. Sure we lock them up quick and fine them more than we would local people, but we have to — it's the only way to keep them in hand. . . . If a local person drove without a tail light, I'd make it ten dollars and costs, or maybe warn them. If a nigger migrant does it, I make it twenty-five and costs. It's the only way we can keep them under control.

From all observations during the months in the stream, it appeared that the most effective way of dealing with the potential criminal or delinquent was simply to evict him from the crew. This occurred four times during the migration. When an individual exhibited behavior that would probably end with arrest, he was driven from the camp. This did nothing to lessen the total problem of a social behavior among migrants, but did lessen the problems for this one crew. Such a practice results, however, in a problem which was identified by a small-town police officer in these words.

We don't have much trouble with (the migrants) except the floaters. They're the ones who don't stay in one crew but (probably are forced to) move around. The ones who stay in one crew have their troubles, but the *real* problem is with the "figs" who don't seem to be able to stay on any job or with any crew.

**HEALTH**           The fact that problems are relative — that is, subject to definition by the individual, to the expectations of his group, and to his unique experience — is nowhere better demonstrated by the migrant than in matters relating to illness. Infant diarrhea would probably be a major calamity in a white, middle-class, northern family; it might or might not be viewed comparably by a negro migrant household. It is entirely possible, therefore, that not all of the illnesses (as defined by professional workers) were reported. Among the 547 individuals in the crew, only 69 "illnesses" were enumerated. In addition, there were 29 cases involving ante- or post-partum care, and 7 obstetrical deliveries were noted.

*Acute medical problems.* Thirty individuals had acute disabling illnesses — none of which were of such a nature as to warrant special discussion. Eighteen of these reported no formal medical care, five consulted a private physician, two consulted a private physician *and* entered a hospital, and six were treated in an out-patient clinic — one in Florida, five in New York.





"Some of us has our babies in the hospital with a doctor . . .



. . . but some of us still likes the midwife—what we had back home."

The 18 who received no formal medical care gave several reasons for their failure to do so, as follows:

Medical care not considered important	6
Home treatment preferred	4
No money available to pay physician	7
Previous treatment by physician discouraged patient's going again	9
Previous treatment by physician not effective	1
Too ill to visit physician's office and "knew" he would not make house call	3

It is worthy of note that only 7 of these 30 reasons involved money (although it may have been of secondary importance in some cases). Most important were the concepts of illness, of the physician's role, and of the physician-patient relationship. In the participant observer's words.

I've had many long discussions with the people about why they do or don't visit a doctor when they are sick. One reason seems to be that doctors were never very important in their lives before they left home. There was never much money available, and doctors were a luxury they had to do without. Most of them admit that if they are badly frightened or in great pain they will visit a doctor. But they aren't easily frightened by sickness, so they do without. . . . Many of the older ones just accept sickness as part of life, just as they do being out of work or living in a shack. Many of them have home remedies, too, for almost anything that goes wrong. They use all kinds of dried plants to make tea, a different one for every ache or pain, and they *believe* these help, so maybe they do. . . . I don't believe there is much trust in white doctors, because they resent the way they are treated. A white doctor (they say) makes them wait until he has seen his white patients, and then acts as if he is afraid he won't get his money. Some believe that they are kept coming back as long as they have any money, and then are discharged whether they are well or not.

Thirty-four individuals reported acute non-disabling illnesses, none of which were unusual in nature or degree. In only 9 cases was medical care sought from private physicians.

Five accidents were reported as illnesses. Two crew members were disabled in a truck crash, and two others received mashed fingers in an accident at a loading platform. All were treated by physicians under workman's compensation plans. The fifth accident was fatal and occurred in New York State when a 62 year-old woman came into contact with a live high-tension wire while on her way to work in the fields.

Among the 29 pregnancies, contact was made with a private physician or prenatal clinic as follows:

In first trimester	4
In second trimester	13
In third trimester	9
Only at time of delivery	3

Sixteen of the pregnant women had or intended to avail themselves of a low-cost maternity plan in the Belle Glade and Pahokee communities.

*Venereal disease.* Eight cases of gonorrhea were reported during the year and are discussed separately because they relate to the whole problem of migrant life in the stream. Two infections "showed up" shortly after the migrants first arrived in Virginia; the other six before the crew moved on to New York. All of the eight resulted from one contact with a 22 year-old single woman who was making her first trip in the stream. Three of the infections were treated by a private physician in the Virginia community, and four in public health clinics in Virginia and New York. One case was untreated at the time the individual left the crew shortly after arriving in New York. So far as was known, these individuals had infected no others in the crew.



"Sometimes you jus' ain't got even a nice toilet to go to."



The participant observer's notes are important in this connection. Among the better (stable) people in the camp there were no casual sexual contacts. This one girl, who had no family, "played around" with the younger unmarried men. This was done more or less quietly, but all of the young fellows knew about her. . . . She was not paid for these sexual contacts, so far as I could learn — it was simply a free-and-easy situation. Two of the men had intercourse with her *after* the first case (of gonorrhea) became known.

(The infected individuals) prefer to go to a private doctor. They say he doesn't want to know about where they got the disease, and that the clinic people raise a "fuss," so they try to stay away from clinics if they can. . . . The ones who did go to the clinic went because they had no money. The doctor makes them pay before he treats them.

It is impossible in the context of the present study to indicate the actual health status of the migrants. Such findings could come only from a detailed study of greater magnitude than that undertaken here. It was evident to all observers, however, that there were illnesses during the period of observation which were not recognized as such. Whether this lack of recognition stems from genuine ignorance or from an unwillingness to seek help (and therefore an unwillingness to recognize the illness) cannot be determined. On this point the participant observer had the following comment:

I saw several "conditions" I would have called illnesses and would have sought help with. But these people dread going to the doctor, from all they say, because of the way he treats them and because it costs money. This is one reason why they ignore what I would call an illness. . . . Another reason, though, is genuine ignorance. I've seen babies have diarrhea, and be really sick with it, but the mothers say this is just the way babies are — so they have no idea of getting help. . . . It isn't just a matter of economics, or of the clinic being available. These people just haven't learned what being sick means.

## SUMMARY

From the preceding brief descriptions and discussion it is apparent that migrants *do* have problems. It was the impression of the staff, however, that these problems were no different from those of persons of *comparable social and racial status*, either in quality or quantity. The fact that the migrant lives in confined quarters and with a considerable degree of economic insecurity appears to make his problems

more dramatic and to suggest their greater frequency. The fact that he lacks the support of regular group living and group identification probably contributes to his problem, but to no greater degree than is the case of comparable individuals who are not migrants. None of this is said by way of defense — rather it is to suggest that the intelligent direction of social and economic services toward meeting his needs can be effective in meeting his needs.

c

## ARE THERE SOLUTIONS FOR THESE PROBLEMS

The discussion in the preceding pages has attempted to show in capsule form some of the problems migrants face as they live in the Atlantic Coast Stream, and to give at least a partial explanation of why they react as they do to these problems. The staff of a project such as this inevitably arrives at some conclusions regarding possible "solutions" (or at least preventive measures) which might lessen the problems associated with migrating agricultural labor — both for the migrant and for those who attempt to work with him in one professional capacity or another. It is not inappropriate, therefore, that these be included.

### PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH CREW MEMBERSHIP

**SIZE OF THE CREW**      In the course of the year's work, the staff of the project had the opportunity to observe the life and work of many crews, both in Virginia and in New York. It is apparent from these observations that some of the problems of migration were tied directly to the size and structure of the crew. One of the very evident characteristics of the project's crew was its lack of group consciousness. It was apparently too large for its members to have any real sense of identification, other than as members of Mr. B's crew. Despite the informal nature of his past life in his home community, the Negro migrant has "belonged," and from this belonging has had some stability and some security in his human relationship. A large crew does not afford him these qualities — he is *in but not readily a part of* a functioning group. The small crew, in contrast, appears to afford the migrant both stability and security of membership. Leaders of small crews — less pressed to meet large demands for labor — are prob-

ably able to be more selective in choosing the households which will be included in the crew, and hence have more congenial or homogeneous groups of households. Also, in the small crew there is an apparent greater sense of belonging. As a result, the migrants in such crews reinforce each other, both in work and camp situations, and both the crew leader and the crew itself function in some measure to control the behavior of the members. From all observations it seemed evident that small crews do have less disruptive camp life.

It is obviously impractical to suggest that large crews be abolished, for many of the farm situations demand large crews. This recognition of the value of the small crew is important, however, in a later connection (see *infra*) and should be kept in mind.

## PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH AVAILABLE SERVICES

**SIMILARITY OF SERVICES**      One of the apparent difficulties regarding the migrant's (and hence the community's) meeting his problems adequately lies in the unevenness of available services. Migrants, by the very nature of their work, are temporarily in two or more states during each migration cycle. Because states differ greatly in the services they afford the migrant, and because he is rarely a completely informed person regarding such services, there is considerable confusion in his mind as to what is available to him. New York State, for example, makes readily available certain health services — in fact, sends public health nurses into the camps to search out his health problems and to provide services. Another state — in which he may reside for an equal period — not only makes no such provisions for his health needs but may even appear to discourage him from seeking assistance.

Again, in Florida a child welfare worker is now specially assigned to an area in which migrants predominate, and every effort is made to meet their needs (within the legal structure). In contrast, another state in which the migrant finds himself makes no provision for even a sympathetic hearing of his needs as regards child welfare services. Under circumstances such as these the migrant has no "pattern" of behavior to which to adapt himself in time of trouble, and even where available to him the appropriate services are therefore often ignored or unknown.

**INTEGRATION OF SERVICES**      The need for an integration of services was apparent on two levels. The first of these was on the local level, for it was evident that in many communities agencies

worked in an "icey apartness" from each other. Many of the problems of migrants (and these are not different from the problems of others of like characteristics) involve not only health *or* child welfare *or* education *or* assistance but a combination of two or more of these. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the closer integration of the several services in many communities would result in a more comprehensive approach to some of the problems which confront the migrant.

On the interstate level, also, there was an apparent need for better integration of services. Many health problems, for example, cannot be met in the relatively short period of residence in a given area, and are therefore "postponed" by an agency until the migrant will be in a more stable position as regards residence. In one case a youngster with a "club foot" did not receive orthopedic care simply because no one agency was able to accept the case — knowing that the family would be moving in the migrant stream and could therefore not be counted upon to be in the community when subsequent stages of treatment would be reached. (Nor was there any guarantee that adequate professional services would be available in the communities into which the family would move.) Had an integration of services among states — both financially and functionally — been possible, this type of problem might have been handled at an appropriate time in the child's life.

A less dramatic example was that related to immunization against poliomyelitis. Some migrant children received a first injection of Salk vaccine in Florida, entered the stream, and never received another. A few received two but not the third. A fortunate few received all three. The responsibility for this failure cannot be laid either to Florida's health departments or to other health departments in the stream. Part of the responsibility rested with the migrants, perhaps, in that their ignorance and disinterest was such that they did not seek the subsequent injections. But most of the difficulty (and perhaps one which has no ready solution) lies in the fact that there were as many independent approaches to such a problem as there are states in the stream.

## UNDERSTANDING THE MIGRANT

An important aspect of the problem confronting those who provided professional services to the migrant centered in their lack of understanding of him as a person. Conversations about the migrant, even among professional workers, were all too often replete with stereotypes, and there was too little effort to understand the peculiar cultural and social conditions which caused him to behave as he did. Public health doctors and nurses, for example, often demanded behavior of the migrant worker

which was totally unrealistic to him and totally beyond his comprehension — and threw up their hands in disgust when he failed to follow their instructions or to meet their demands. Efforts at communication were often based upon middle class standards and pitched at a level far beyond his comprehension. (Even though the health literature made available in health centers or clinics is written for the “average” person, it is quite evidently beyond the comprehension of many migrants.) Unless professional workers will attempt to understand the peculiarities of his cultural characteristics and the unique demands of his environment, little can be expected in the way of helping him to meet his needs or of keeping him from being “a thorn in the side of the community” in which he works.

The examples given above apply to health, but this aspect of the problem of dealing with migrants applies equally to other professional groups. For example, one important “discovery” by a group of educators in Palm Beach County who studied problems associated with teaching migrant children, has been closely related to the points emphasized above (4).

THE “POINT OF ENTRY”                      All of the cultural and social forces discussed earlier tend to “wall off” the migrant both from the community in which he finds himself and from professional and lay workers who would help him to meet his needs. The problem of finding a point of entry — a way of “getting to him” — is an important one. Better educational opportunities for his children (especially the older ones) are of little use if the migrant ignores them. More adequate health services are of little use if the migrant sees no reason for employing them. How, then, can the migrant be motivated to better his own circumstances — at least those which depend in part upon his own motivations?

It is increasingly apparent to the staff of this project that one area in which the migrant was motivated to the use of services was in the matter of day-care for children. Whether the usual middle class personal concerns for the child’s welfare operate or not (and they probably do not in many of the households), the child has an important value in the Negro migrant group. This concern appears most often to be based in the economics of migrant life, since the mother must usually be in a position to accept work when it is available. The day-care center, then, is an important adjunct of the migrant’s life — whether in Florida or in the stream. In many of the contacts with migrants having young children — especially in the stable households — there was an expressed concern regarding the availability of such services.

If this is an area in which migrants *do* recognize their need (just as they often *do not* recognize health or other social needs), day-care services may well provide the "point of entry" in aiding the migrant to meet his needs. The ways in which other services (which the migrant does *not* recognize as essential to his welfare) can possibly be related to day-care programs can only be suggested at this point. It is not unlikely that many health services for all members of the household could be integrated with day-care programs, as could many of the educational, recreational, and other programs which appear to be desirable. If the integration of services for the migrant in a given community was such that all such services could profit from his interest in day care, a long step forward might well be taken in helping him to meet his needs.

A second point of entry, it appears, may be that of working with the crew leaders. The crew leader is certainly interested in the greatest possible production by his crew, and many have indicated that the problems outlined earlier inevitably reduce the crew member's economic effectiveness. With some few exceptions, however, crew leaders are no more conversant with ways in which the migrant worker's problems can be met than are the workers themselves. (Most often his own background is little different from that of his workers, although he usually possesses qualities of leadership and management which make it possible for him to be the small-businessman he is.) Since the crew leader is so often a *leader* in fact, it follows that raising his level of comprehension of the causes of problems and of ways of meeting them can be one possible effective means of meeting the migrant's needs. If the crew leader understands the need for camp sanitation, immunization, adequate day care, social security, and so on, he may well be an effective instrument in finding solutions to the migrant's problems.

Steps are ordinarily taken to acquaint the crew leader with the legal restrictions applying to his work and with opportunities for up-stream employment of his crew. In such activities the employment agencies have been both active and effective. There has been, to our knowledge, little comparable work in other areas of the crew leader's responsibility.<sup>1</sup> This appears to be a feasible point of attack on the migrant's problems, since most crew leaders are anxious to have productive crews, are readily identified, and are usually resident in Florida for some months

---

<sup>1</sup>In the second migrant health project (now under way in Palm Beach County) the project staff is undertaking such a task in a small and informal way. A group of Negro crew leaders meets weekly with the health educator, medical social worker, and other members of the staff in what amounts to an adult education program on basic health needs. It is too early to forecast the results, but the initial responses have been favorable.

during the winter. Again, however, such action would require the cooperation and integration of the several agencies concerned with migrant's problems. Were such "adult education" activities undertaken, the effect might well be seen throughout the stream as the crew moved with a leader who was more conscious both of needs and ways of meeting them.

## SUMMARY

In retrospect, the preceding pages have shown that the migrant's problems are not ones for which there are ready solutions. They stem in part from the economic situations related to seasonal agricultural production, and these are not readily controlled. No less important, however, are the cultural characteristics of the migrant and the particular patterns of life which mobility creates, and his insecure place in the communities in which he lives and labors. Third, and not unimportant, are the basic attitudes toward the migrant of the states and communities in which his labor is demanded. Finally, membership in the stream is constantly renewed from the areas in which agricultural displacement is taking place, so that there are continuing changes in the personnel involved in migration.

With factors such as these inherent in the situation, it is inevitable that migrants will have problems and that migrants will constitute problems for communities and states in which they temporarily reside. Many of these — if they are to be solved — require state and federal legislation, as in the case of residence requirements. Others demand an integration of goods and activities on an inter-state level, and this is not easy to achieve. Still others demand changes in the basic attitude toward the migrant as a person — no less difficult to achieve. It is highly probable that there can never be a completely successful approach to the problems associated with migration, but there is no reason to believe that at least a partial solution cannot be had — perhaps through some of the methods suggested in the preceding paragraphs.



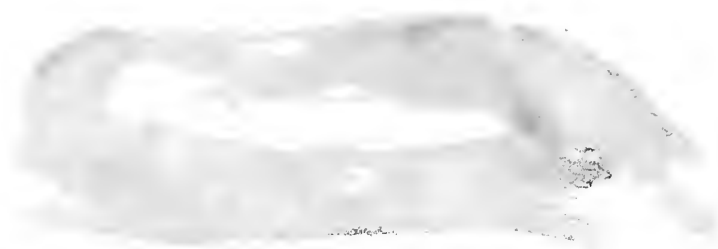
# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Certain of the more important publications in this area of social concern have been referred to in the text. These and a few others which are of value in this connection are listed here for the benefit of the reader who wishes further information on the subject.

- 1) Louis Persch, "An Analysis of the Agricultural Migratory Movements on the Atlantic Seaboard—1930-1950." Ph. D. Dissertation, American University, Washington, D. C., June, 1953.
- 2) William H. Metzler, *Migratory Farm Workers in the Atlantic Coast Stream*. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., Circular No. 966.
- 3) E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.
- 4) Hazen Curtis (ed.), *Working With Migrant Children in Our Schools*. Tallahassee: School of Education, Florida State University, 1956.
- 5) President's Commission on Migratory Labor, *Migratory Labor in American Agriculture: Report*. Washington: Superintendent of Documents, 1951.
- 6) Edward E. Lewis, *The Mobility of the Negro*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1931.
- 7) Shirley E. Greene, *The Education of Migrant Children*. Washington: National Education Association, 1954.
- 8) Louis E. Ducoff, *Socioeconomic Backgrounds of the Migratory Labor Situation*. Washington: Superintendent of Documents, 1949.
- 9) U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *The East Coast Migratory Stream*. Washington: Superintendent of Documents, 1954.







331.796

K 82t

# KEEP CARD IN POCKET

Date Due

DUE	RETURNED	DUE	RETURNED
DEC 02 1996			
APR 28 1999	NOV 27 1996		
APR 28 1999			
LIBRARY			



They follow the sun. main  
331.796K82t



3 1262 03270 9528

Withdrawn from or. Surveyed to Internet Archive

